

ANGLIA RUSKIN UNIVERSITY

**WHERE IS HOME? CULTURAL HYBRIDITY AND THE QUEST
FOR BELONGING IN TURKISH-GERMAN CINEMA**

CHRISTINA LANGHANS

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degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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ANGLIA RUSKIN UNIVERSITY

FACULTY OF ARTS, LAW AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

ABSTRACT

**WHERE IS HOME? CULTURAL HYBRIDITY AND THE QUEST
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This study examines the cinematic portrayal of the interrelationship between the concepts of home and cultural hybridity within contemporary processes of migration in Thomas Arslan's *Brothers and Sisters* (1997), *Dealer* (1999), *A Fine Day* (2001) and *Ferien* (2007) as prime examples of Turkish-German cinema. It argues that cultural hybridity offers the potential to construct new spaces of home apart from demarcating, essentialist polarities.

While integrating critical discourse analysis and literary analysis of post-colonial (Said, 1978; Bhabha, 1994), transcultural (Welsch, 1999, 2010; Antor, 2010; Werbner, 2015), sociological (Castells, 1997; Gellner, 2006), and film theories (Deleuze, 1986; Elsaesser, 1999; 2015; Hicketier, 2001), this study consists of two stages. Firstly, it explores concepts of culture, cultural hybridity, home, and collective memory in order to provide a theoretical and conceptual framework for the film analysis and, subsequently, it contextualises Arslan's oeuvre through the analysis of Turkish-German cinema. Finally, it explores the cinematic techniques used in four consecutive films by Arslan in order to examine the interdependence between these apparent antipodes: home and cultural hybridity.

My study demonstrates that the concept of home in a cultural hybrid context must be re-evaluated. The rigid understanding that the concept of home feeds on exclusionary polarities can no longer withstand in today's society that is marked by ever-increasing boundary-crossings and cultural hybridity. At a time in which increased migratory streams to Europe coincide with the flourishing of nationalistic movements throughout Europe it is essential to recognise the processual and transformative qualities of culture and home that questions habitual constants, such as cultural identity and memory, and refutes primordial givens and cultural categorising in order to pave the way to new spaces of home.

Key words: cultural hybridity, home, belonging, collective memory, Turkish-German cinema, Thomas Arslan

**WHERE IS HOME? CULTURAL HYBRIDITY AND THE QUEST
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INTRODUCTION

‘There’s no place like home...’ Dorothy’s words in the *Wizard of Oz* entail a longing for home, a promise to herself that she will find her home someday and the implicit emotional significance that the word *home* conveys. Her words suggest that her understanding of the concept of home is unambiguous and connected to a specific place. Due to its associative nature, home has a myriad of individual meanings and expressions. It is an abstract concept that implies subjective associations and is tied to the need for stability. Today, however, flexibility and mobility have become dogmas, whether based on a necessity for life, a search for better living conditions, or lifestyle choices. The progressing process of globalisation¹ and increased mobility challenge the spatiality of home and increase the necessity for a re-evaluation of the concept.

Migration, whether forced or voluntary, involves leaving familiar surroundings to begin a new life in a less familiar, often foreign environment, city, country, and culture. Thus, migrants and their offspring especially face the consequences of dis-embedding and dislocalisation² as they are forced to create a home in a foreign country and deal with their estrangement from and the physical distance to their home country. Although migration and mobility have always been a part of human history, the number of migrant workers, refugees³, exiles, and people who emigrate to find a better life and better living conditions has increased, especially in the recent years (see for example Bhabha, 1994; Papastergiadis, 2000; Kraidy, 2008; Castles, de Haas and Miller, 2014). In fact, we live in an era in which increased migratory streams (mostly forced) to Europe coincide with the flourishing of nationalistic movements throughout Europe⁴. Global societies and borders are rebuilt and reinforced, xenophobia gains legitimation through self-protection, and the notion of home is increasingly used as an

¹ Globalisation is understood as process, not a final condition and therefore I follow Jürgen Habermas’ definition of the concept (2001), who claims that globalisation ‘characterizes the increasing scope and intensity of commercial, communicative, and exchange relations beyond national borders’ (Habermas, 2001, p.67).

² With the term *dislocalisation*, I refer to both the physical and the mental aspect of mobility.

³ According to UNHCR, ‘Global forced displacement has increased in 2015, with record-high numbers.

By the end of the year, 65.3 million individuals were forcibly displaced worldwide as a result of persecution, conflict, generalized violence, or human rights violations. This is 5.8 million more than the previous year (59.5 million)’ (UNHCR, 2016)

⁴ In Germany, the right-wing populist party Alternative for Germany (AFD) has had election success one after the other starting from 2015. Marine Le Pen and Front National have gained increasing support among the French population, whereas Viktor Orbán and FIDESZ have received it in Hungary, to name a few.

instrument for exclusion. The experience of migrants is marked by the crossing of thresholds, the meeting or clashing of the *self* and *other* – the known and the unknown – which have a profound impact on migrants' identity and therefore on their understanding of who they are. Their sense of belonging and semblance of home is threatened as migrants often lose their point of reference by leaving the certainty of home. In Europe, the exclusionary and often short-sighted tendencies that increasing numbers of refugees and the growing population of migrant generations in Europe are confronted with, suggest that these consequences of migration are often neglected by government integration politics, European mobility, enlargement efforts, economic endeavours, as well as academic research.

Today, monocultural understandings of culture are justifiably under attack, and attempts to counteract their inapplicability include multicultural, intercultural and transcultural paradigms. Cultural hybridity is a recurrent concept in postcolonial discourse aiming to foreclose essentialist cultural theories, which understand culture and cultural membership as determined by exclusionary and rigid factors such as common blood ties, language and religion and is one of the most widely used and most criticised concepts within the postcolonial field. According to Homi K. Bhabha, one of the concept's leading advocates, it functions as an antidote to:

[...] essentialist claims for the inherent authenticity or purity of cultures which, when inscribed in the naturalistic sign of symbolic consciousness frequently become political arguments for the hierarchy and ascendancy of powerful cultures (Bhabha, 1994, p.83-84).

However, the traditional concept of home – understood as the localisation of the feeling of belonging – is often based on essentialist views on identity and culture and thus challenged in culturally hybrid contexts, which may have impacts on home-constructing processes.

The aim of this doctoral thesis is to explore the cinematic portrayal of the interplay between the need as well as the search for home along with a sense of belonging and contemporary processes of migration as well as cultural hybridisation. In particular, the study analyses how aspects of home and belonging are staged and reflected in selected films by the Turkish-German director Thomas Arslan, who is considered a leading example of Turkish-German filmmakers (Göktürk, 2000b; 2000c,

p.340; Ezli, 2009, p.210; Neubauer, 2011, p.167). Thus, this thesis does not intend to discuss the actual historical reality of Germans who are of Turkish origin but primarily focuses on selected films by Thomas Arslan⁵.

Turkish migrants and their offspring are the largest minority in Germany. According to the Microcensus 2013 by the German Federal Office of Statistics, approximately 16.5 million people with so-called migration background, which includes migrants and their offspring, lived in Germany, 12.8% of them with Turkish roots (German Federal Office of Statistics, 2014). Since the first recruitment agreement from 1961 between the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) and Turkey⁶, Bhabha's 'mute' Turkish guest worker, who was incapable of communicating (1990, pp.315-317), has gained a voice through second- or third-generation Turkish-Germans and, in particular, through their films (Göktürk, 2000c, pp.329-347).

In this context, it is worth stressing that films have the power to develop utopias that enhance the ability of viewers to imagine alternatives to the bondages of monocultural, homogenous, and separatist perceptions of culture, national identity, social hierarchy, and gender binaries. As a matter of fact, the work of many contemporary Turkish-German filmmakers is characterised by a critical distance to both worlds – the one that is linked to the Turkish cultural origin, and the one that is associated with aspects of the German host country.

Arslan's work includes, among other films, a well-received trilogy about Turkish-German individuals and their identity conflicts in Berlin (*Brothers and Sisters*⁷, 1997; *Dealer*, 1999; and *A Fine Day*, 2001) and a film set in a supposedly idyllic place in Germany (*Vacation*, 2007). These films and their settings are to be understood as a reflection of the filmmaker's own identity conflict as a second-generation Turkish-German and as a person who lives between two worlds. Thomas Arslan gained Europe-wide recognition when he received the Max Ophüls Award in 1997 and the FIPRESCI Award of the Berlinale 1999 for his work, which confirmed

⁵ The German Agency for Civic Education (Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung) provides a comprehensive compilation of online resources for more information on the actual historical reality of Turkish-Germans in German: <http://www.bpb.de/izpb/9698/tuerkische-minderheit-in-deutschland?p=all>.

⁶ This recruitment agreement was one of many initiated by the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) in order to boost the postwar German economy. Contracts were also signed with Italy (1955), Greece and Spain (1960), Morocco (1963), Portugal (1964), Tunisia (1965), and Yugoslavia (1965) (Meier-Braun, 2013, p.17).

⁷ For the purpose of this thesis, I have decided to use the films' English titles. All German titles and production information can be found in the filmography.

his position as an important representative of contemporary Turkish-German cinema. Arslan's oeuvre suggests a development of its own accord (Löser, 2004, p.141). He is frequently counted among the first generation of a new kind of Turkish-German filmmakers who no longer focus on the migrant as victim of the dichotomy German-modern culture, Turkish-archaic culture (Löser, 2004, p.134; Göktürk, 2000c, p.340; Halle, 2008, 154; Ezli, 2009, p.210). However, compared to Fatih Akın – another prominent Turkish-German director, Arslan has received limited scholarly attention. In the tradition of auteur cinema, Arslan's films reflect a rather personal and intimate perspective onto migrants. His oeuvre underlines a particular interest in questions of home and belonging, which is often reflected by the motif of transition. Thus, I chose four fictional films of his body of work in chronological order which deal with the topic of cultural hybridity and home and express certain developments with regard to the two concepts. The analysis of these films with varying foci however not deviating from these topics explores different shores and different shades of their interrelation.

The interplay of uprootedness and regrounding is an everyday reality of the millions of migrants in the world. It increasingly affects cultural identity, as it is 'at once deterritorialized and reterritorialized' (Fortier, 2000, p.1). This in turn influences an individual's sense of belonging and their feeling of home. To elaborate, the home-making process is an important means of overcoming the feeling of losing ground, of getting lost between worlds. To the first-generation migrants who left their home country to settle in a new country, the myth of home gains significance as a source of stability, of origins, which of course collides with the reality in which migrants live and which is characterised by movement, estrangement, and the need to reproduce their lost home. The imagined home with its familiarity, its comfort exudes stability in its very nature. It is the place where things (supposedly) still are as we imagine or remember and long for; thus, in this context, the concept of home is unavoidably connected to the old culture, the culture of origin. Stuart Hall suggests that '[m]igration is a one way trip. There is no "home" to go back to' (Hall, 1987, p.44). This rather drastic judgement may be partially true in the case of first-generation migrants. Coulson goes as far as suggesting that the the migrant does not have another choice but living between identities, 'negotiating with a strangeness that is both within and around them' (Coulson, 1997, p.4). Kaya and Kentel argue similarly with regard to Turkish-Germans:

There is a lack of awareness in both the homeland and “hostland” concerning the characteristics of migrants and their children. It is still commonly believed in Turkey that migrants of Turkish origin and their descendants in the west are gurbetçi⁸ with a strong orientation towards the homeland that will someday bring them home. On the other hand, they are also called Almancı, a term that depicts such individuals as being rich, eating pork, having a very comfortable life in the West, losing their Turkishness and becoming increasingly germanised. They are also stereotypically called “foreigner” in their own countries of settlement. (2005, p.3)

In essence, these arguments suggest that the tension between different cultures make it impossible for migrants to (re-)construct a home as a place of belonging. With this study, however, I intend to demonstrate that in the films by Thomas Arslan (as a representative of second-generation migrants), a home apart from exclusionary and essentialist ideas of belonging is proposed. The home discourse feeds from group identity and collective memory supporting an essentialist understanding of home. Home has been frequently examined in the context of trauma and exclusion, which again enforces an essentialist view on culture and home. Yet, or perhaps therefore, the traditionally static concept of home affects integration processes from the inside and the outside. To elaborate, it affects migrants but also the host culture respectively. The high goal of integration of migrants, in my opinion, is problematic as the term integration per se is essentialist in its nature. While integrating one culture into another, the host culture entails a hierarchy often at the cost of certain aspects of the migrant culture. Integration is often understood to be normed by standards that the others have to adapt or rather assimilate to (Terkessidis, 2010). Exclusionary and essentialist ideas of belonging deny the possibility of recreating a home as a migrant without assimilation. Thus, a less rigid, more flexible, and hybrid understanding of culture suggests to strive for inclusion rather than integration and provides a framework within which migrants may gain the opportunity to make a new home. In this sense, inclusion is understood as a mutually permeable process that constructs and nurtures a bridge between cultures.

⁸ The Turkish term gurbetçi is derived from the Arabic word gurbet which means diaspora and stands for someone living in a different country, foreigner, expatriate (Kaya 2007: 18).

Still, the migrant experience is twofold, as they, on one hand, have to carry the burden of being separated from familiar places, the familiar sound of their language, family, and possibly friends, their customs, and their social behaviours. At the same time, migration may create a form of new freedom, the possibility of establishing a fusion of identities and ‘break barriers of thought and experience’ (Said, 2000, p. 185). This spectrum can be clearly seen in the large and increasing field of second-generation migrants. Their cultural heritage is split between two cultures: the culture of their parents and the culture of their own birthplace. Edward Said characterises this fluid condition as ‘a potent, even enriching, motif of modern culture’ (Said, 2000, p. 173).

Cultural hybridity as an antidote to essentialist classification models provides broader perspectives for the analysis of Arslan’s films, which is supported by Bhabha who suggests that abandoning essentialist cultural categorisation is ‘theoretically innovative and politically necessary’ in order to understand and emphasise ‘those interstitial moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of ‘differences’’ (1994, p. 269). Hamid Naficy also sees the need for a ‘brush-up’ with regards to postcolonial film studies (1999, p. 2). Crossing the threshold harbours so much potential for new options, especially as film plays such a significant role in constructing, remembering, and disrupting identities. Nevertheless, the danger of getting tied up in a bipolar scheme is ever looming.

The notion of home and its development in a cultural hybrid context so far have been neglected in research on Turkish-German cinema. While most studies concentrate on questions of ethnic discrimination, gender issues, and monocultural continuities (see Göktürk 2000a; 2000b; Mennel, 2002, Rings 2008; Ezli, 2009; Neubauer, 2011; Schick, 2011; Berghahn, 2012), the importance of home and the consequences of the interplay between the longing for home and cultural hybridisation have not been examined in any depth. This is despite the fact that the consequences of current hybridisation trends may include the loss of a clear understanding of belonging and home and with it, the development of a confused cultural identity. Thus, this study intends to close this gap in research and offers the first in-depth investigation of the interrelationship between home and cultural hybridity as portrayed in the above mentioned films by Thomas Arslan. By conducting a qualitative analysis on how Thomas Arslan constructs and narrates the themes of home and belonging, this study contributes to an understanding of the psychological, socio-political, and economic

effects of cultural hybridity and its potential to produce new spaces of home apart from demarcating polarities. Thus, the following research questions guided this study:

1. How is the hybridisation of cultures portrayed and reflected in Thomas Arslan's films, and which representational styles are used for this?
2. How is home and belonging articulated in Arslan's films, and how does this relate to hybrid tendencies?
3. What are the key values and beliefs in forming new ideas of home and belonging in Arslan's films, and how can these influence the current inclusion processes of migrants?

The theoretical framework of this research project integrates concepts derived from cultural theory (Geertz, 1994; Hall, 1987, 1990, 1997; Assmann, 2011; Eigler and Kugele, 2012), post-colonial studies (Said, 1978; Spivak, 1993; Bhabha, 1994), transcultural studies (Welsch, 1999, 2010; Kraidy, 2008; Antor, 2010; Werbner, 2015), sociology (Castells, 1997; Gellner, 2006), ethnology (Turner, 1987; Appadurai, 1996), and film studies (Deleuze, 1986; Elsaesser, 1999; 2015; Hickethier, 2001; Erll and Wodianka, 2008), and, therefore, uses a multidisciplinary approach in order to achieve the research objectives.

The first chapter will discuss the theoretical and conceptual framework of the thesis and thereby clarifies significant concepts, such as culture, cultural hybridity, home, and collective memory, thus functioning as a basis for the film analysis chapters. The second chapter provides a critical overview of relevant literature on Turkish-German cinema and Thomas Arslan. This chapter intends to locate the thesis within the existing body of research with respect to Turkish-German cinema and Thomas Arslan. The following chapters will further examine the interdependence between these apparent antipodes: home and cultural hybridity. Chapters 3 to 6 explore how the protagonists deal with this relationship of tension by analysing four consecutive films from Thomas Arslan's oeuvre. I apply these theories and concepts to the analysis of cinematic narratives by Thomas Arslan in order to understand how home and belonging is portrayed here and the extent to which cultural hybridity affects the perception of home and belonging. I attempt to achieve this while focusing on the

portrayal of the different forms of homes and the accompanying struggle due to its inherent binary opposition (Chapter 3: Home between the Worlds in *Brothers and Sisters*), the portrayal of belonging within a culturally hybrid context (Chapter 4: Questions of Belonging in *Dealer*), the development of the culturally hybrid protagonist and her search for home (Chapter 5: *A Fine Day* – A ‘Modern’ Migrant Story?), as well as the deconstruction of the German *Heimat* (Chapter 6: *Vacation* – The *Heimat* Idyll?).

This thesis will connect the general and the particular in order to explore and incorporate previous approaches, analyse in detail a particular form of cultural expression, and develop new ideas for rethinking home and cultural hybridity in ways that open up the discussion beyond opposition such as stasis versus transformation or presence versus absence. Through the analysis and specification of the experience of migrants, it may be possible to apprehend and amend our understanding of home and its significance in today’s globalised world, which compels us to recognise the necessity of a (new) mode of thinking that is not bound to fixed binaries but that is rather open to constant renegotiation and revision.

Even today, migrants and their offspring are only slowly finding their way and are being accepted into discussions about Germany as home (Eigler and Kugele, 2012). Home seems to have been an untouchable subject reserved for ethnic Germans. One possible reason for this may be the problematic history and ambiguous connotation of the German *Heimat* (home). In fact, Germans have only recently rediscovered, have started to rehabilitate the concept themselves and accept the public discussion of home, which is reflected, for example, by the release of numerous recipe books dedicated to *Heimatküche* (literally translated as home cuisine) and the new focus on the preservation of regional dialects (Zöller, 2015, p. 10). Yet, the German *Heimat* is a politically and emotionally charged concept, especially due to its profound misuse by the national-socialist regime in 20th century, but it must be seen as crucial to the formation of German identity. Even though, Arslan’s films describe realities in Germany, my study focuses on the concept of home in a culturally hybrid context and therefore makes a distinction between the concepts of *Heimat* and *home*.

Exclusions proclaimed in the name of the concept negatively affect home. At the same time, we must highlight the emancipatory, creative potential, especially with regard to minority cultural expressions. One commonality between the concepts of home, *Heimat*, homeland, patria, and others is that they were all moulded by linguistic,

historical, cultural, and social circumstances. Due to the historical and cultural influences, the word took on different meanings and connotations. It mirrors the cultural development and understanding of belonging. Thus, the analysis of the concept of home (understood not only as housing but as manifestation of the sense of belonging) in a culturally hybrid context, particularly in the films by a Turkish-German filmmaker, could justify the rethinking of the traditional concept of home.

When I started working on this thesis in 2010, Germany had slowly developed towards becoming more of a migration country (see the speech of the former Federal President of Germany Christian Wulff given on October 3, 2010)⁹. Ever since the first recruitment agreement was initiated by the Federal Republic of Germany, integration policies have been rather hesitantly executed; in fact, the first integration law in the history of Germany was agreed upon on April 14, 2016 and was passed on May 24, 2016 (Spiegel Online, 24 May 2016). Since then, the face of the European Union has changed, and its implicit values of indivisible, universal human dignity, freedom, equality, and solidarity (Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, 2000) have been challenged and are in danger. The year 2015 saw 60 million refugees fleeing their homes worldwide, of which a significant number were from Syria, Afghanistan, and Somalia. These numbers could, unfortunately, set the record for the highest number of refugees in a year (UNHCR, 2016). Of this incredibly large number, only relatively few refugees fled to Europe. In 2015, approximately 1.3 million people applied for asylum in EU member states. The largest number (477,000) applied in Germany (UNHCR, 2016). Sadly, this situation challenges the cooperation among EU member states and thus questions the level of solidarity. Many movements against refugees in Germany, especially PEGIDA¹⁰ and also the politically legitimated newer right-wing populist party 'Alternative für Deutschland', fear that the so-called Western values, *our* home, are at risk due to the refugees arriving¹¹. The fact is, however, that

⁹ The former Federal President of Germany Christian Wulff gave this speech on the 20th anniversary of the German re-unification. Amongst other things, he appealed to appreciate diversity and foster solidarity among the different cultures that were living in Germany. With his statement (Islam belongs to Germany), he received credit across German borders but also caused an emotional debate, which frequently resulted in exclusionary and even racist comments.

¹⁰ PEGIDA is the abbreviation for Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamisation of the Occident (Patriotische Europäer gegen die Islamisierung des Abendlandes) and is an anti-Islamic, populist movement in Germany, which started in Dresden in 2015 and later organised demonstrations in many other cities and towns while misusing the traditional Monday demonstrations. They were a substantial component of the peaceful revolution in the German Democratic Republic (GDR) in 1989.

¹¹ I rigorously distance myself from such populist generalisations and ideas, as they are simply false and intended to induce and increase xenophobia and hate. I have received my socialisation in

the European Union and its citizens are currently in the process of deconstructing themselves, politically and perhaps with regard to a shared identity. Therefore, by analysing Thomas Arslan's films, I aim to demonstrate that the values constituting the concept of home require a re-evaluation, which is not only necessary for refugees and migrants but also for the citizens of the European Union.

Germany, a so-called Western country. Yet, my values differ significantly from the values promoted by such populist movements.

1. CULTURAL HYBRIDITY AND HOME

1.1 Preliminary Remarks

‘Home is where the heart is’. These words attributed to Gaius Plinius Secundus (AD 23–AD 79) capture, in my understanding, the emotional nature of the concept of home. The mere sound of the word *home* evokes comfort and stability. Home – not understood as simply a dwelling-place but rather as a concept essential for the construction of identity and the focal point for the sense of belonging – takes up a new role of significance in contemporary society. The notion of home marries the need for locality (Appadurai, 1996, pp. 178-179) and the need for belonging. The so-called age of globalisation¹² has questioned the indestructibility and the implicitness of home as a constant place of comfort and belonging. In order to examine and understand the interdependence between the apparent binaries of home and cultural hybridity, this chapter examines the notions of cultural hybridity and home and as such will set the basis for the film analysis chapters. In order to examine home in a culturally hybrid context and to provide a conceptual framework for further explorations on cultural hybridity, I first take a look at the developments of the notion of culture, which are understood as inevitable due to changing power structures and increasing migration. Subsequently, I explore cultural hybridity in the postcolonial context (Said, 1978; Spivak, 1993; Bhabha, 1994; Werbner, Modood and Bhabha, 2015) and the context of identity (Robertson, Masts, Tickner, Bird, Curtis, and Putnam, 1994; Castells, 1997, Papastergiadis, 2000; Castles, de Haas and Miller, 2014). In the following parts, the concept of home will be analysed in depth. I examine the German concept of *Heimat* to highlight its particular meaning as well as the need for the feeling of home. In order to link home to culture and cultural hybridity respectively, it is set in relation to the notion of collective memory, which is analysed mainly based on the writings of Jan Assmann (2000; 2011) and Pierre Nora (1996). Consequently, I propose dimensions of home in order to demonstrate how the concept of home is experienced. As a

¹² In fact, the token *globalisation* only deficiently describes the enormous changes people are exposed to today, which challenge and question people’s individual relationship with social worlds and their localisation. Subject to negotiation are, according to Pfaff-Czarnecka (2012, p.14), the position of the individual in a collective, the attachment to the natural environment, and ‘influences of global circulation’, which corrode local forms of production.

conclusion, I relate the concepts of cultural hybridity and home in order to highlight their interdependence.

1.2 From Monoculturality to Transculturality

The concept of culture is a complex notion with numerous definitions. It has undergone several stages of development. The early definitions of culture revealed perceptions of culture as homogenous clearly demarcated formations, whose borders were determined by biological and historical similarities. Further, the term was often used interchangeably with notions such as nation-state and race. Smith (2001), Anderson (2006), and Gellner (2006) have, in their analyses of the concept of nation, dealt with this understanding of culture. They discuss monocultural perspectives of national identity as separatist, homogenous, and essentialist constructs, which are highly problematic for multi-ethnic coexistence and conviviality in globalised societies. The essentialist view of identity, which goes along with this position, suggests that the identity of individuals and groups is basically predestined and its construction happens without their will (Cabral, 2003, p.58). Such an understanding emphasises the natural and inevitable inherence of identity; members of the same culture share this cultural identity based on a common repository of myths, heroes, landscapes, events, and memories. Essentialist notions of identity, therefore, go hand in hand with paradigms of exclusion. Primordial approaches suggest a similar understanding, as they assume that cultures are formed and held together through ties based on factors such as blood, language, territory, and cultural differences. These ties are taken as ‘cultural givens’ (Smith, 2001, p.51; see Geertz, 1994). According to this view,

[h]aving an identity meant – above all – having a country, a city, an area: an entity where all that was shared by the inhabitants of a place was identical or interchangeable. Those who did not share this territory, who had neither the same objects and symbols nor the same rituals and customs, were the others – those who were different (Garcia Canclini quoted in Papastergiadis, 2000, p. 103).

This understanding of culture in which cultures are clearly demarcated from *other* cultures can also be found in colonial discourse (see Said, 1978). Here, the *self* constructs its own identity through the often negative, discriminating portrayal of the other. The *other* is the foreign entity, the threat, the less developed, while the *self* is the familiar entity, the known, the well-educated. This emphasises the demarcation, the exclusiveness of cultures, and the supremacy of the colonising cultures. Thinking along these lines can result in ethnocentrism, which is a worldview based on binaries that sees one's own cultural aspects or behaviour as the right way, separated clearly from the supposedly wrong way of other cultures (Gudykunst and Kim, 2003). Therefore, these theories may provide dangerous justifications for nationalist and racist ideas (Welsch, 1999). Furthermore, they do not seem to be applicable to today's globalised world.

The idea of cultures as homogeneous entities based on primordial roots, therefore, has long been challenged by several researchers, including Bhabha (1994); Spivak (1993); Welsch (1999); Kraidy (2008); Benessaieh (2010); Antor (2010); Moses and Rothberg (2014); as well as Werbner (2015). Multicultural, intercultural, and transcultural notions have been established in order to respond to the post-modern demand to question binary divisions and challenge 'taken-for-granted' (Werbner, 2015, p.2). They are understood as a gradual development away from monocultural, essentialist views on culture. Multicultural approaches describe, according to Marwan Kraidy, the 'coexistence of plural cultures' (2008, p.58). The term multiculturalism is often used to label public policies in so-called immigration countries, such as Canada and New Zealand (Benessaieh, 2010, p.17). It merely describes the cultural diversity of the population and promotes respect for cultural particularities. The concept has frequently been criticised for encouraging cultural groups to isolate and emphasise differences rather than pursue inclusion. According to Yuval-Davis, multiculturalism in fact tends to exaggerate cultural difference and therefore promotes exclusionary tendencies and those towards demarcation (Yuval-Davis, 2015, p.197). Will Kymlicka (2001 and 2009) is among the advocates of multiculturalism. Kymlicka emphasises the rights of national minorities (particularly in Canada), and by fostering the preservation of cultural particularities, he enforces demarcation from other cultural groups in Canada, thereby supporting an essentialist and homogenous notion of culture. While multiculturalism does not go beyond the mere acceptance of and respect

for coexisting cultures, the concept of interculturality fosters the dialogue between cultures.

In essence, according to the intercultural approach, cultures are still separate islands, which ‘understand and recognise one another’ (Welsch, 1999, p.196). Yet, they do not move beyond the act of bridging differences. The focus on cultural differences is the source of criticism towards the conception of interculturality (Welsch, 1999). Even though there are approaches of de-essentialising the notion of interculturality that are intended to ‘cross borders’ (Delanoy, 2006, p.239; see Antor, 2006, p.29), this study follows Welsch’s assessment of interculturality, which places the notion still within an essentialist paradigm. Thus, I support a transcultural approach, as the prefix *trans*, rather than vacillating between particular points, entails moving through and across them. The prefix reflects my understanding of culture as a fluid, interactive, developing conception, rather than rigid and with demarcations. Transculturality has become a widely-used concept in the last decade¹³, and definitions of transculturality include ‘interaction among people and on crossing boundaries and cultures’ (Antor, 2010, p. iii) and Welsch’s cultural ‘hybridisation’ as an antidote to monocultural approaches to culture (Welsch, 1999). I advocate a processual understanding of culture and apprehend transculturality as the continuous process of exchange among cultures and the resulting transformation of cultures. I support Welsch’s claim that the core of transculturality is to challenge the idea of cultures as separate and stable entities and to highlight the permeability of cultural boundaries (1999). Other than multiculturalism and interculturality, transculturality ‘traverses cultures, bringing to light what is common or alike amid what seems to be different’ (Benessaieh, 2010, p.18). This approach, however, is not immune to criticism. Critical voices suggest that this concept of culture, if logically thought through, will lead to a complete homogenisation of cultures (Blumentrath, Bodenburg, Hillmann and Wagner-Egelhaaf, 2007, p.17). While countering these voices, Benessaieh proposes that transculturality provides ‘alternative ways of relating to otherness in times when diversity is likely to continue and expand’ (2010, p. 29). In other words,

¹³ The inflationary use of concepts with the prefix ‘trans’ has caused the loss of some of its heuristic value, as it frequently has been used carelessly and/or interchangeably with the term ‘intercultural’, especially in the German context (Flüchter and Schöttli, 2014, p.1). I, therefore, underline the differences of these two concepts.

transculturality points out the foreigner in all of us by emphasising the differences and simultaneous relatedness between cultures.

While I acknowledge the potential of homogenisation in some aspects, especially with regard to consumer behaviour or general mainstream culture, the processuality of cultures entails a creative potential apart from primordial, rigid cultural identities. A central trope of transcultural notions is cultural hybridity or hybridisation (Welsch, 1999, 2010; Kraidy, 2008). The notion of cultural hybridity is inextricably linked to postcolonial discourse, and particularly affects the lives of migrants.

1.3 Cultural Hybridity

Once marked by predominantly negative connotations related to contamination and unsustainability (see Papastergiadis, 2000), the concept of hybridity could be called the slogan of a contemporary mainstream society and appears to go hand in hand with the concept of progress. Electronic gadgets, cars, and other devices often no longer have only one purpose. Multi-functionality, crossing traditional borders, merging formerly separate fields, creating hybrids – each aspect of our lives today is affected by these processes. Hybridity captures the spirit of our times and expresses itself in a myriad of fields, including architecture, sports, electronics, and biology.

Today, the concept of hybridity has entered numerous academic fields ranging from disciplines such as sociology and literature to more interdisciplinary subjects that could be called hybrid themselves, such as postcolonial studies. Naturally, hybridity can be also found in human relationships and can especially be observed in the notion of culture. Organic interplay of cultural differences and the fusion of cultural aspects is the paradigm of postmodernity, making the foreign more familiar and the familiar more foreign to the point that the difference between the two almost disappears. It echoes the process of globalisation with its limitless economic exchanges and the (supposedly) inevitable transformation and melting of cultures. The area of postcolonial studies has turned cultural hybridity into a key focus of its research. In brief, cultural hybridity can be understood as the creative process formed by the convergence, interaction, and the resulting mixing of cultural aspects, including values, preferences, language, behaviour, and symbols.

1.3.1 Cultural Hybridity in a Postcolonial Context

Homi K. Bhabha, Stuart Hall, and Mikhail Bakhtin are among the leading proponents in the discussion of cultural hybridity and belong to the advocates of this cultural model within the frame of postcolonialism and cultural studies. Despite the differences between these authors, they support the understanding of cultural hybridity as an antidote to essentialist approaches to identity. While Hall highlights the hybrid character of cultural identity (Hall, 1990; Papastergiadis, 2000, p.273), Bakhtin emphasises hybridity with regard to the ambivalence of language (1979). Bhabha's work, on the other hand, counters Said's concept of Orientalism with respect to its essentialist tendencies. Bhabha's work also illuminates the conflicts within colonial discourse and intends to move away from binary oppositions through cultural hybridity.

Bhabha suggests that there is a space 'in-between the designations of identity' and that 'this interstitial passage between fixed identifications opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy' (Bhabha, 1994, p.4). With this in-betweenness, he highlights the possibility of negotiation among cultures. Bhabha describes cultural hybridity as the result of different influences leaving their traces in a discourse that includes several voices (Bhabha, 1994, p.243). His cultural hybridity is based on postcolonial discourse but can easily be applied to any context of migration or exile. Cultural hybridity occurs in situations of cultural crossings and intersections when different values, cultural contents, or circumstances create new cultural formations. The process of attempting to translate cultural differences from one culture to another, from the foreign to the familiar creates a new version of the translated text; this is due to the translator's - or in other words the transmitter's - own pattern of thought, values, and enunciations. Such a perception inevitably leads to the break-up of the essentialist polarity of the *self* and the *other*. While colonial discourse made a clear distinction between the two and enforced the value-scale on which they were placed (seeing the self, the familiar, often the white as the superior, the better, the more educated, while the other, the foreign, the native is on the other end of the value spectrum), the concept of cultural hybridity makes cultural borders permeable. In this sense, cultures have been and will always be exposed to unintentional exchanges, borrowings, and mimicry, while intentional cultural hybridity creates a 'collision between differing points of view on the world'

(Ahmad, 1995, p.360). In the theoretical frame of cultural hybridity, cultural differences can be examined in a new perspective, as they lose their differentiating, polarising character. The notion of cultural hybridity creates a context 'where difference is neither one nor the other but something else besides, in-between' (Bhabha, 1994, p.219).

Bhabha and his advocates emphasise the positive aspects of cultural hybridity. Cultural hybrids are people who live in-between cultures and marry aspects of different cultures to form a new space, which has been christened the *third space* by Bhabha (1994). He suggests that this space in between cultures, often also between languages, behaviours, and identities, can be understood as a fluid space between cultures, where the memories of origins are born out of the future rather than the past and where difference no longer creates binaries (1994, p.313). The third space has the potential to break open the rigid borders of cultural categorising and is a space where cultural enunciations meet, mingle, fight, get along, disagree, and reconcile to create a new form of themselves. Bhabha states that:

It is only when we understand that all cultural statements and systems are constructed in this contradictory and ambivalent space of enunciation, that we begin to understand why hierarchical claims to the inherent originality or 'purity' of cultures are untenable, even before we resort to empirical historical instances that demonstrate their hybridity (Bhabha, 1994, p.37).

Certainly, this third space, which is in flux and challenges the validity and existence of essentialist movements and their claims for primordial identities and culture, is well-suited to being represented in various art forms, such as films and literary works. According to the early advocates of cultural hybridity, including Bhabha (1994) and Spivak (1993), the concept of cultural hybridity is described as a resistance by the colonised against hegemonic structures. It is also described as the apparently endless pool of creative possibilities gained as a result of an attempt to overcome the rigid binaries and identity markers of colonialism. The celebration of hybrid identity and its fruits is widespread, yet it often fails to regard the power of existing differences and, in fact, essentialist tendencies that are accompanying the attempt to denigrate cultural differences. Therefore, the notion of cultural hybridity as an antidote to essentialist views on culture is challenged (Ahmad, 1995; Friedmann,

1997). In this sense, hybrid identities within a third space presuppose the existence of these strict boundaries between cultures, which cultural hybridity claims to overcome.

Consequently, in postcolonial studies, hybridity was not only a warmly-welcomed new cultural paradigm but also a concept about which there were heated arguments. In particular, the balance between the benefits and disadvantages of using the term was and *is* often the point of contention. Several scholars have celebrated cultural hybridity as a means to challenge and overcome political and cultural domination (Bhabha, 1994, p.159; see Joseph, 1999), while others suggest that cultural hybridity is a process of cultural creativity that turns ‘insults’ into ‘strengths’ (Werbner, 2015, p.21). Meanwhile some scholars criticise the concept’s sole inclusion of the *enlightened*, privileged intellectual (Spivak, 1993; Friedman, 1997, p.72) and others go so far as to suggest that the use of the term cultural hybridity supports and enforces systems of inequality (Ahmad, 1995, p.10; Buden, 2005, pp.126-128). These critics accuse theorists who follow the hybridisation approach to a culture of producing an ideology of a cosmopolitan cultural elite, which usually originates in the secure fold of the bourgeoisie. In their opinion, such a view of culture romanticises global migration as a source of cultural enrichment while neglecting the grim realities of refugees, the displaced, and homeless people (Blumentrath, et al., 2007, p.28). In this context, the impact of the lack of belonging, the neither here nor there, is frequently neglected or underestimated. Friedmann criticises that Bhabha’s cultural hybridity does not take the human need for cultural belonging into consideration (1997, p.88). The view that praises only the benefits of cultural hybridity ignores that this façade of the *happy intermingling* of the cultures often hides the traditional political and economic power structures as well as the need for a place we call home. It becomes clear that despite or perhaps due to the numerous advocates of the notion of cultural hybridity, it is by nature not a stable concept.

The migrant as vanguard or ‘embodiment’ (Werbner, 2015, p.21) of cultural hybridity is not undisputed (see Ahmad, 1995; Werbner, 2015). Ahmad argues that discourses of cultural hybridity neglect the fact that a ‘sense of place, of belonging, of some stable commitment to one’s class or gender or nation’ (Ahmad, 1995, p.14) nurtures political and cultural processes based on historicity and fixed locations rather than ephemeral celebrations of hybridity. This stands in contrast to Bhabha’s understanding of a migrant as a person who lives in two cultures, two worlds and, thus, ‘maintains a double perspective on reality’ (Friedmann, 1997, p.78). I propose that the

points of contact and transgression to differing cultures, in fact, appear more frequently and more immediate in migrant situations and migrants are in fact more often exposed to cultural hybridity. Yet, Ahmad and Friedmann imply another highly exclusionary and essentialist aspect that is influenced by cultural hybridity: an individual's identity.

1.3.2 Cultural Hybridity and Identity

Cultural hybridity has a profound impact on the identity of individuals. Identity is a concept connected to the *self* and self-image. It is an element of many academic disciplines. Manuel Castells states, 'identity is people's source of meaning and experience' (Castells, 1997, p.6). Identities are always constructed by using 'building materials from history, geography, biology, productive and reproductive institutions, collective memory and personal fantasies, power apparatuses and religious revelations' (Castells, *ibid*, p.7). To develop it further, identity is rooted in a process of meaning that is being constructed on the basis of a cultural attribute or a related set of cultural attributes that is given priority over other sources of meaning (Castells, 1997). In order to construct identity, a point of reference is needed, whether it is a person, a location, or a moral ideal. The concept of the *other* is intertwined with identity; in fact, it can be understood as a counterpart to and formative aspect of identity. By defining one's own identity, one clearly excludes the *other*. Thus, the internal homogeneity central to the notion of identity, the base for the unity, is constructed. An individual's identity appears to be connected to a 'persistent sameness and unity' that differentiates the individual from other identities (Relph, 1976, p.45). The feeling of exclusivity may be seen as a form of demarcation and of *marking* the home territory. Traditionally, the division between the *self* and the *other* is a strong identity marker. Every identity is relational and 'the affirmation of a difference is a precondition for the existence of any identity' (Mouffe, 2005, p.15).

The notion of cultural hybridity forces us to take a closer look at identity formation processes in migration, mobility, and transcultural contexts rather than link identity to essentialist concepts such as ethnicities or nationalities. Cultural hybridity has the potential to make boundaries between the *self* and the *other* more blurry even to the point of disappearing. However, the question of identity is the focus of controversies with regard to the concept of cultural hybridity. Bhabha suggests that cultural hybridity's third space 'prevents identities at either end of it from settling into

primordial polarities' (1994, p.5), implying that this space is in fact demarcated by fixed identifications, which bases its existence on the essentialist ends of the spectrum and thereby suggesting that they reinforce their fixity. It appears that identity relies on borders, yet hybrid identities are in fact 'evidence that borders are shifting, reforming, and being created' (Iyall Smith, 2008, p.6). In this sense, cultural hybridity augurs an understanding of cultural identity that is not based on exclusions and demarcations but rather on the creation of new spaces. The experience and polarity of the *self* and *other* is grounded on forms of *belonging* and *not belonging* that are not fixed or unalterable. It would appear that cultural hybridity affects identity in the form of unsteadiness and uncertainty with which migrants especially are confronted. Conforming with this tenor Coulson suggests that:

In the exiles and migrants of the twentieth century that same ambivalence marks both external and internal relationships: here, the movement and mediation between self and other is enacted both spatially, between the societies left and entered, and in time, in the life of the group and the individual, in the recollection of the past and the anticipation of the future (Coulson, 1997, p.4).

Migrants are confronted and have to deal with strangeness and estrangement around them as well as within themselves. This plurality of identities or rather the lack or blurriness of a clear identity is often a source of stress and contradiction. Migrants are confronted with the actual physical displacement as well as the cultural and social movement between worlds. In the process of leaving or distancing themselves from one culture and approaching the other, they have become strangers to both and have perhaps become homeless.

The excluding nature of identity also ties the concept to a particular place as the human mind often equates the polarity of the *self* and *other* with *here* and *there*. Polarities are generally constructed along a value scale. One side represents the culturally accepted positive, the other the negative such as light versus dark, day versus night. The polarity between the *self* and the *other* must also be understood in such a manner. The *self* and *here* exude a certain comfort, familiarity, and positivity while the

other and *there* symbolise the foreign, the unknown, the ‘uncanny’¹⁴ (see Freud, 1982). The ever-looming danger of an identity construction based on *us* and *them* can be avoided by understanding the multiplicity of elements that take part in the construction of identity and resist the urge to rely on the exclusion circle. Thus, identity forming aspects are engaged in an interdependence with one another. The outside, the *other* cannot be seen as something excluded from people’s identity but in fact has to be seen as part of everyone’s identity.

In this sense, I propose that cultural hybridity can create forms of liminal identity, transferring Turner’s concept of liminality to the identity concept within the cultural hybridity paradigm as ‘[l]iminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arranged by law, custom, convention and ceremonial’ (Daly, 1990, p.70-71). This fluidity stands in contrast to the assumption of coherence with regard to the concept of identity. In fact, it shall provide stability that is understood as essential to understand one’s place in this world. Cultural hybridity with its liminal character does not seem to provide this stability since hybrid identities can be seen as cultural identities on the threshold.

But what causes this process of hybridisation? It could be said that humans have a natural need for harmonisation, for making the foreign less foreign and more familiar. Cultural hybridisation is not an entirely new concept, reserved for postmodern societies. Most contemporary cultures are a result of past hybridisation processes. Art, architecture, and especially language show the results of ancient and recent hybridisation. Inhaling the new and understanding it in accordance with the old value system, in combination with the new perspectives, has been a common practice since the beginning of human civilisation. Kim proposes that adaptation is a natural and universal phenomenon and that this organic process is based on ‘human instinct to struggle for an internal equilibrium in the face of adversial environmental conditions’ (Kim, 2005, p.378). Delanoy even suggests that ‘cultural hybridity is a basic condition for cultural formation’ (2006, p.236). Yet, the apparent binary of a critical cultural self-reflexivity based on a non-holistic view on culture and the longing for belonging, personal and cultural identity raises questions especially with regard to the coexistence of belonging and hybridity. Bhabha mentions the impossibility of retreating to a place of belonging in a globalised world where uncertainties begin at

¹⁴ ‘unheimlich’ (Freud, 1982). All translations from German in this thesis are mine.

the threshold of home (Bhabha, 1994, p.15). In fact, he describes unhomeliness as a characteristic of cultural hybridity. The transcultural perspective on cultural hybridity may help to break through this apparent incompatibility, as it focuses on interaction and exchange rather than on separation and ‘neglects neither roots nor the continuity of tradition’ (Skrefrud, 2016, p.40). Understood in this sense, cultural hybridity does not exclude experiences of differentiation and conflict, since they support a constant re-determination of societal and individual identity concepts in a dynamic process that releases creative potential (see Bhabha, 1994; Welsch, 1999; Antor, 2006; Delanoy, 2006; Moses and Rothberg, 2014, Skrefrud, 2016). Thus, cultural hybridity from a transcultural perspective allows the conceptual apprehension of phenomena which are in the process of becoming and liminality as well as the analysis of transitions and the third space. At the same time, within the frame of migration, it breaks with the binary logic of homogenisation versus heterogenisation. The notion’s deconstructive nature may help to overcome its potential drawbacks. In this sense, cultural hybridity may create a new, entangled identity without having to abnegate habits and traditions. In order to examine the interrelation of cultural hybridity and home further, it is now essential to approach and analyse the concept of home.

1.4 Home

In human history, life has always had a distinct, unequivocal centre – the home. Etymologically, *home* means house, abode, and native place (Hoad, 1996). Several studies and books have been composed on the topic of home from multifaceted perspectives. The widespread tenor with regard to the notion of home is that it expresses the significance of an emotional attachment to a place and associates the term with notions such as house, safety, happiness, settling down, and dwelling. The traditional understanding of home connects it, therefore, with a particular place of origin, where people are born, grow up, receive an education, have children, enjoy or suffer through life, and find their last rest (see for example, Relph, 1976; Greverus, 1995; Blickle, 2002; Eigler and Kugele, 2012; Zöller, 2015).

The significance of home is underlined by the United Nations’ acknowledgement of one’s right to a home, demonstrated by considering the displacement from home a violation of a human right (United Nations, 2014). In the

German context, the right for home goes even further, which is controversial and whose legal basis is disputed. The idea of a right to home (in this case, assumed) is mainly derived from the *Charta of German Expellees*, which was signed by the speakers of the German expellee associations in 1950. It lists the rights and duties of refugees and expellees from the former Eastern territories and other former German communities in Europe (Bund der Vertriebenen, 2016), supporting a primordial legitimisation of home. This right for home is connected to the right to live in the country of birth or childhood and, thus, entails the involuntary and painful loss of home in the former Eastern German territories. The misuse of this understanding of the right to home is bound to occur, especially considering the widespread xenophobia and irrational fear of foreign infiltration at a time when millions are forced to leave their homes due to war and poverty, which is unfortunately often answered, also by former expellees, with the sudden oblivion of their own past.

Throughout time and in particular in recent years, the awareness and recognition of the multiplicity of places of belonging that can evoke the feeling of home has increased. These places of belonging may be actual physical places or imaginative places based on memory or dreams. Yet, this feeling of attachment is mediated by individual and collective memory (Eigler and Kugele, 2012, p.1) and is based on a conglomeration of engrams, traces of memories stored in our brain (Zöller, 2015, p.7). Thus, the feeling of home, although generally connected to realms of belonging and a similar interrelationship between memory and locality, may have different connotations across cultural groups. In the following sections, I introduce the concept of *Heimat* to point out the particularities of the understanding of home in Germany. Subsequently, I explore the need for home and the link between home and collective memory, which is understood as significant with regard to cultural identity. Within the framework of collective memory, I finally analyse the dimensions of home in order to examine the aspects of the feeling of home, which will allow the analysis of Arslan's films and the exploration of his portrayal of home and cultural hybridity in greater depth.

1.4.1 *Heimat*

The meaning of the German *Heimat* differs from the meaning of home in other languages, as it is closely tied to German cultural history (Blickle, 2002; Eigler and

Kugele, 2012; Zöller, 2015). It is central for understanding and analysing German culture and history and carries specific meaning. It is thus also important for the analysis of home and belonging in films by the Turkish-German director Thomas Arslan.

In the German context, the notion of *Heimat* was first widely used as a legal term describing a right of residence. The German Dictionary of the Brothers Grimm defined *Heimat* as ‘the land or region, in which one was born or has permanent residence’ (Trier Center for Digital Humanities, 1998–2014)¹⁵. In the eighteenth and nineteenth century, the term found its way more often into the writings of nationalistic movements as well as the works of Romantic artists such as Goethe and Schiller. Also, painters and other artists utilised the concept of *Heimat* as an inspiration for their works, often for its mythifying nature and its purity. The feeling of *Heimat* is a part of the implicit German self-perception (Blickle, 2002, p.6). As mentioned before, the German *Heimat* has had a tumultuous history with a rather bitter aftertaste. The absence of an exact equivalent to *Heimat* in the English language underlines its unique characteristic. According to the historian Klaus Ries, the feeling of *Heimat* can only arise with individualisation (in Zöller, 2015, p.15). He, thus, places the first emergence of the concept within the period of enlightenment. It particularly flourished in the 19th century, a tumultuous period, as a counter current to insecurities due to wars and growing industrialisation (for example Blickle, 2002; Zöller, 2015).

The mythification of German landscapes, especially the forests and the Alps, which resulted in the establishment of the first natural reserves in Europe, the emergence of societies for traditional clothing and cultural heritage preservation were intended to escape insecurities and the advance of negative effects of industrialisation, such as exploitation, noise and pollution. During the First World War, home, especially the German *Heimat*, became increasingly associated with demarcation (Zöller, 2015, p.20), culminating in its first climax during the national socialist period and again in times of right-wing populist successes in the second decade of the 2000s (see the election successes of the ‘Alternative for Germany’). In fact, the German notion of *Heimat* defines itself through the binary of *Fremde* (the foreign) and *Heimat*. This is endorsed by Franz Kafka who notes, ‘One has to go to the foreign in order to find the

¹⁵ ‘heimat, das land oder auch nur der landstrich, in dem man geboren ist oder bleibenden aufenthalt hat’ (Kompetenzzentrum für elektronische Erschließungs- und Publikationsverfahren in den Geisteswissenschaften an der Universität Trier, 2008–2014).

home that one has left' (1924 during a talk with Gustav Janouch, Janouch, 1968, p.251). Yet, this gets problematic in migrant situations, which will be discussed in depth later in this chapter. As a reaction to the aftermath of the Second World War as well as to the boundlessness of today's world, the nostalgic spectrum of *Heimat* also gains a renaissance. Various celebrities and wannabe celebrities write books, make films, or otherwise express an understanding of home. For the most part, this portrayed *Heimat* is geographically specific and the plots generally revolve around childhood stories, the pains of growing up, and memories. A discussion of the concept of *Heimat* per se, aside from the individual, subjective descriptions of childhood dreams, the sensation of comfort is rare, often because it is seen as a concept that is too emotional and too personal to be academically examined.

Fictional and biographical books exploring the topic of *Heimat* are proliferating, especially in Germany. Examples of such writers include the Nobel Prize winner Herta Müller, who intimately deals with her *Heimat* in her books¹⁶. These sometimes more, sometimes less artistic products resemble almost an act of liberation, given that in Germany, *Heimat* has been a sensitive topic ever since the end of the Second World War and after years of its misuse and abuse for imperialistic and nationalistic ambitions, particularly in the period of National Socialism in Germany. In his comprehensive and impressive study, *Heimat: A Critical Theory of the German Idea of Homeland* (2002), Peter Blickle suggests, 'There is no doubt that Heimat in modern German speaking situations has played and will continue to play a significant role in constructions of self, identity, and meaning in public, as well as private, spheres' (2002, p. 6). The concept of *Heimat* is omnipresent in German circumstances. Different kinds of cultural conservation tools, songs, paintings, literary, and cinematic expressions have attended to the ever-present longing for *Heimat* and the film critic Anton Kaes suggests in his essay on Edgar Reitz's well-known television series *Heimat*, 'Nowhere do kitsch, false consciousness, and real need lie closer together than in the German word *Heimat*' (Kaes, 1987, p.175).

¹⁶For example, in *Always the Same Snow and Always the Same Uncle* (*Immer derselbe Schnee und immer derselbe Onkel*, 2011) she calls her relationship to Heimat a 'ghost pain in remembering' and 'irrational longing' (p.36).

1.4.2 Why Home?

Based on the German meaning of *Heimat*, I understand the concept of home as more than a dwelling or housing. Home is an undeniably complex notion and a social construct. Due to the emotional and individualised nature of the concept, one cannot solely rely on the scientific method of examination, which entails the study and observation of the subject matter without any personal interpretation. Such a procedure would not be fruitful for the analysis of home. The researcher is required to balance his or her observation and research skills with his or her own personal paradigm based on experience and personal values. Bachelard calls this quality ‘transsubjectivity’ (Bachelard, 1994, p.xix), which should capture the essence of any analysis of home. One’s home has the quality of ‘autovalorization’ (Bachelard, 1994, p.6), which can be described as a quality from whose mere existence one derives direct pleasure. The aspects that signify home differ from person to person. Home is generally connected with positive feelings; home itself is a positive feeling for most people, a word that instantly creates sensations of warmth, comfort, and safety (a specific exception to this rule is victims of domestic/child abuse). It can be represented by a location, a memory, or even only by the longing for something familiar. In today’s times of globalisation and social change, home gains a new predominant meaning: home helps people understand their story and (re-)gain their place in the world.

In order to approach the concept, I will start with an examination of the aspects that the meaning of home is based on. First, I suggest that the meaning of home has been derived from a physical need based on times of earliest human cooperation: the survival instinct. The probability of survival is greater in the pack, in a group than alone. This created a kind of cooperation–expectation–re-cooperation–trust circle. Our ancestors realised early on that cooperation is good for them, whether it comes to sourcing of food or to defending against enemies. This formed the expectation that the existence within a group is functional, which resulted in repeated cooperation. It could be said that this in turn resulted in the development of mutual trust, which led to a stronger, emotional bond with the location where cooperation occurred and the people who were involved. This understanding places home at the basis of Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, as it is clearly connected with and fulfils the need for personal safety, belonging, and more importantly, physiological needs, such as shelter, food, sleep, and reproduction (Maslow, 1987).

Home can also be considered an essential point of reference, a starting point from where we can view and try to understand the world and from where individuals define themselves. Home is connected to the place where people spent the most important years of their socialisation. According to Zöller, these years may lie in childhood, youth, or later and in fact, especially with regard to migrants, can take place more often in life (2015, p.8). Home is connected to the story we tell about ourselves and which other people tell about us. This connects home with identity. In order to construct identity, a point of reference, which clearly differentiates the *self* and the *other*, is necessary. As mentioned before, the division between the *self* and the *other* is a strong identity marker. Nevertheless, the *other* and the *self* are not necessarily binary, but in fact, the *other* is a part of the *self*. In the sense of home, we can see the inside/self as an imagined place with spatial limitations, which only makes sense in relation to different kinds of outside/other. The point of reference to distinguish between inside/the self and outside/the other plays a significant role in identity construction. Home, the point of origin of the childhood, where the heart is and where we feel safe, has to be seen as such a point of reference due its significant impact on identity formation processes. Home can, therefore, be related to Leferink's concept of 'signs of identity'¹⁷, which are not only objects or situations that represent identity but that also transmit, confirm, and develop identity (Leferink, 2006, p.43). This concept speaks of objects that have a partly stable status, such as a flat or a house, as well as a partly ephemeral character, such as particular gestures or momentary physical feelings. The place we call home is the place of the highest concentration of identity signs or identity markers, such as family members, the art on the wall, a crucifix above the door, and childhood pets. These objects and feelings are expressions of our identity but also sources of our identity. It can be said that home, through its identity-forming character, is in fact an expression of identity.

Home, in fact, can be understood as a foundation of the identity of individuals as well as communities. Home as a sphere of intimacy, personal relationships, and emotions plays a decisive role in identification processes. The family is habitually seen as the focal point of socialisation and thus is often seen as a main characteristic of home (Blickle, 2002, p.41; Zöller, 2015, p.9; see Berghahn, 2013). Common blood and habituation since birth appear to be inseparable bonds. In general, the family is

¹⁷ 'Identitätszeichen' (Leferink, 2006, p.43).

often considered a place of unconditional love and support. Family can be seen as a preconditioned aspect of our identity and home, as we were born into these relationships and since they have a profound impact on us – in their presence as well as absence. Today, spatial distance between family members is common; therefore, friends are gaining significance as decisive comfort factors in connection to feelings of belonging. Despite the decreasing significance of the family as the main social unit, especially in the Western world, the family is still a major variable in the home-making process. On the other hand, the community, once a strong source of stability and protection from isolation, conflict, vulnerability, and estrangement, has largely lost its home-making qualities. There was a time when life in a community was indispensable for survival. During this time, the community equalled home. These communities, however, had to be intact in order to truly satisfy this need. In reality, they were more often ‘imagined communities’, referring to Anderson’s concept (2006) in which the patriarchal obedience-protection contract was frequently an illusion and certainly a means to justify power. However, communities often needed to be self-reliant, and thus, individuals with certain skills were dependent on others with other skills. This provided a cycle of dependency between or among members of the community. Today, the community as an integral network of support no longer seems to be required nor desired by contemporary, ever-mobile generations.

All the same, Papastergiadis notes that solidarity within a community goes beyond physical security and is a way of ‘making sense of the world’ (Papastergiadis, 2000, p.196). This suggests a danger that accompanies this decline of the community: the potential loss of a clear understanding of our place in this world. Thus, home not only entails relationships to others but also the relationship to our self. Clearly, these relationships, our habituation to them, and our positioning of the self are decisive factors of home.

The metaphor of roots can explain this role. Roots mean stability and signify the attachment to a particular place that provides us with lifeblood. Edward Relph in his book *Place and Placelessness* claims that having:

[...] roots in a place is to have a secure point from which to look out onto the world, a firm grasp of one’s own position in the order of things and a significant spiritual and psychological attachment to somewhere in particular (Relph, 1976, p.38).

Simone Weil similarly argues in her book *The Need for Roots* that the need for roots is as important as, if not more important than, the need for liberty, security, order, and equality. She goes even further by implying that roots are a necessary precondition for the other 'needs of the human soul' (Weil, 2002, p. 15). By nature, the metaphor of roots entails a certain spatial boundedness, whether it is a specific location or a place of comfort, which connects it with the concept of home. Having our roots in a place means having an attachment that is derived from a certain familiarity with a place, from knowing and being known, which results in emotional affection and profound concern for that place.

Home, therefore, also entails a more intangible, imaginative side: the promising smell of grandma's freshly baked apple pie, the nervous excitement of the first autumn storm, the tingling feeling of soft summer rain on our skin, or the memory of the long lost childhood dream. All these aspects promise home. Often, they are connected with memories, feelings, and happiness. It can be said that home is a metaphor for the 'search to recover a memory of happiness' (Curtis and Pajackowska, 1994, p.199). Home is our personal, earthly paradise, an oasis of comfort. The yearning for home can often be understood as a nostalgic search for a place in our past or our future, supposedly the place and time where we have felt and will feel happiest. These feelings can be seen as a counter reaction to rapid changes, modernity, and undesirable conditions. It is an idealisation of a place in the past or the dreams of the future as an answer to increasing urbanisation, industrialisation, ongoing homogenisation of the way of living and thinking, disorientation, and disillusionment. Especially in the last two centuries, the processes of industrialisation and, first and foremost, of globalisation have increased the desire for a *better* place, a place of belonging. However, this desire is certainly nothing new and correlates with the idea of belonging.

This counter-current to change, modernity, and undesirable circumstances creates hope and resistance through illusion and idealisation. However, the search and longing for this home often remains unfulfilled and unrealisable, since it is created by a combination of memories, hopes, and dreams. Recent scholarship has paid increasing attention to the relationship between culture, home, and memory. The connecting concept of collective memory can be broadly defined as an umbrella term for all mnemonic practices, whether within communicative, media, or institutionalised processes in socio-cultural contexts that manifest the interrelation between the past and the future (Erll, 2005; Erll and Wodjanka, 2008).

1.4.3 Home and Collective Memory

Jan Assmann suggests that memory is preserved as home, which manifests itself especially in situations of absence (2011, p.24). I explore the notion of home within the framework of collective memory as I believe that the link between memory and home is highly significant, especially in the context of migration.

Maurice Halbwachs first developed a theory of collective memory at the beginning of the 20th century (Halbwachs, 1992; Assmann, 2011). Contrary to the predominant theories of the time, which positioned memory mostly within a biological framework (see Assmann, 1988 and 2011), Halbwachs' model completely shifts attention to a social scope of memory away from biological and racial connotations. In fact, he highlights the social contingency of memory (Halbwachs, 1992). Halbwachs emphasises the social frame of reference that is a basis for the construction and retention of individual memory (Assmann, 2011, p.33). Besides the temporal embedding of collective memory, he underlines the spatial condition of memory. Halbwachs pioneered relating memory with the group; in fact, he suggests that collective memory and collective identity are mutually dependent on each other. In culturally hybrid contexts, where the concept of collective identity is challenged, collective memory may as well experience defiance.

Jan Assmann took up the concept of collective memory as well as its social constructivist approach and modified it. Through the examination of ancient cultures, he developed an approach to the construction of a cultural identity based on cultural and collective mnemonics. According to Jan Assmann, collective memory requires a concrete orientation that in turn creates 'points of crystallization' (2011, p.24), spatial as well as temporal. This 'inhabited space' (ibid, p.24), such as the family house or the place of birth, is kept in the memory as home, since '[a]ny group that wants to consolidate itself will make an effort to find and establish a base for itself, not only to provide a setting for its interactions but also to symbolize its identity and to provide points of reference for its memories' (ibid, p.25).

The social construction of the concept is inherent; however, a particular personal, individual level has to be added. The correlations between home and collective memory are intriguing and mutual. With its identity-constructing properties, collective memory can be understood as a supportive force in creating the feeling of home. Simultaneously, home, with its capacity as a reference point and social

reference frame, plays an important role in the sustainable preservation of collective memory.

The predominant school of thought, which appears the most coherent, argues that the social frames of reference that construct and influence an individual's feeling of home are the same social frameworks that shape one's memories (for example, Assmann, 1988; 2000; 2011; Blicke, 2002). Both home and memory have a collective and a very distinct personal dimension. Jan Assmann, referring to Halbwachs, describes these frames in his works as 'connective structures' that connect people with other people (Assmann, 2011, p.2). Occurring in both social and temporal dimensions, these structures provide meaning and justification to joint experiences, attitudes, and rituals while at the same time creating points of reference for trust and orientation within a group (ibid, p.2). Moreover, Iwona Irwin-Zarecka, in her work *Frames of Remembrance* (1994), highlights the collective and value-creating aspects of memory. Her understanding corresponds with Jan Assmann's normative (which is part of the establishment of morals within a culture) and narrative (which tells the story of the culture) aspects of culture. They form the foundation of identity constructions as well as the feeling of belonging (Assmann, 2011, p.130). To reiterate, collective memory is inseparably linked to cultural identity, and Assmann underlines this by suggesting that:

The temporal and spatial elements together with the different forms of communication within the particular group operate within an existential context that is also filled with ideas, emotions and values. All of these factors combine to create a history of home and life that is full of meaning and significance for the image and aims of the group (2011, p.25).

Here, Assmann introduces the correlation between home and collective memory by connecting the notion of home with the concepts of space and time within the frame of collective memory; he also highlights the meaning of home as an identity-establishing factor. Blicke affirms this approach as '*Heimat* is not only like identity, it is identity' (2002, p.66). The connection between home and collective memory due to their important role in the identity construction process, however, also entails the polarity of inclusion and exclusion. This leads to the question of how home and memories of migrants, who are separated from the place and surroundings that have helped to establish their identity, are affected.

While collective memory requires a group that demarcates itself from other groups (Assmann, 2011, p.32), home has individualised connotations that may vary substantially among individuals of one cultural collective. Nevertheless, it is believed that a particular sense of home shared by a group of people may support the maintenance of collective memory throughout the years. This includes the preservation of traditions, cultural moralities, and expectations. While conforming with Aleida Assmann's proposal that there are realms of memory that are both created by images of the past and expectations for the future (1999), the notion of home within the frame of collective memory is fluent and changing, especially in the context of migration. It is based on a particular blend of collective memory, space, and belonging. The challenge of the notion of home within a migrant context is its apparent association with *place-boundedness*.

1.4.4 Dimensions of Home

The spatial dimension of home is often its most visible, most prevalent feature. When we speak about home, we almost always refer to a particular place in the world. It could be said that the very concept of home ties in with our need for belonging to a place. Some scholars go as far as saying that 'Home is (in) a place' (Sarup, 1994, p.96). Ina Greverus speaks of the concept of territoriality in relation to home and the bond to it (1972 and 1995). The psychologist Beate Mitzscherlich suggests that this territoriality, this relatedness to locations and places is based on the fact that 'we live in bodies' (quoted in Zöller, 2015, p.164). Thus, Greverus (1995), Relph (1976), Sarup (1994), and Zöller (2015) understand home as a specific place that cannot be found just anywhere. The difference between this and other spatial categorisations is expressed by Relph when he calls home 'an irreplaceable centre of significance' (Relph, 1976, p.39). Something special seems to encompass the place we call home, a certain spirit of a place, a 'genius loci'. Already, Aristotle ascribed a particular power to places ('echei tina dunamin') and believed that every material body possesses a place of origin to which it belongs and which entails a certain gravity and yearning (in Vallega, 2003, p.45). Applied to contemporary society, the spirit of a place can be related to the memories of and longings for a particular place that keep it alive and therefore protected – in other words, a collective memory. The attachment to – and yearning for – home creates the genius loci of that place. This attachment constitutes

our roots in a particular place. The familiarity that is radiated from it not only entails detailed knowledge about it but also involves a ‘deep care and concern for that place’ (Relph, 1976, p.37). It gains a certain kind of mysticism.

However, the process of globalisation weakens the genius loci, sometimes even allowing it to disappear. Places lose their distinctiveness, and people attempt or are forced to make their homes anywhere in the world. Yet, the significance of certain places for the construction and reconstruction of memory and cultural identity cannot be denied. Furthermore, Michel Foucault emphasises the significance of space within cultural studies by suggesting that some places are ‘still nurtured by the hidden presence of the sacred’ (Foucault, 1984, p.2). In fact, he assumes that there are spaces that reflect societal and cultural conditions. These places, however, do not need to be necessarily territorialised. Foucault distinguishes between ‘utopias’ and ‘heterotopias’: utopias are ‘sites with no real place’, whereas heterotopias are their counterparts, which means that they reflect utopias (Foucault, 1984, p.3). Utopia is the idea of a perfect situation, while heterotopia is the actual representation of utopia. As examples of heterotopias, Foucault names, among others, cemeteries and museums – places that reflect societal and cultural features, norms, and values. In this sense, heterotopia can be applied to the notion of home. Home, however, is at the same time a utopia and a heterotopia. It creates a longing for something not tangible, an ideal, not ‘real’ place, as well as a place that inhabits the elements of this longing while not necessarily having to be territorialised.

Based on the concept of collective memory and its spatial dimension, the French historian Pierre Nora has developed the notion of *lieux de mémoire* (realms of memory), which are places with symbolic and often historically grown meaning to particular nation states and the development of national identities (Nora, 1996). Nora’s definition of the term is as follows:

If the expression *lieu de mémoire* must have an official definition, it should be this: a *lieu de mémoire* is any significant entity, whether material or nonmaterial in nature, which by dint of human will or the work of time has become a symbolic element of the memorial heritage of any community... (Nora, 1996, p.xv–xxiv).

His exploration for *lieux de mémoire* in France has inspired numerous scholars to search realms of memory in other countries (see for example, François and Schulze,

2008; den Boer, Duchhardt, Kreis and Schmale, 2012) and combines spatiality with time. According to Aleida Assmann, realms of memory epitomise a form of continuity for the otherwise rather ephemeral memories of individuals. However, she also emphasises the physical aspect of space and realms of memory. Places help to manifest cultural realms of memory as they ‘fix and affirm memories by anchoring them locally in the ground’¹⁸ (Assmann, A., 1999, p.299).

On a less historical level, *lieux de mémoire* is ‘a culturally specific convention that is referenced and remembered in different ways, often through spatial allusions’ (Hermann, 2012, p.162). They are affected by social, political, and historical situations as well as by developments in the field of media. At the same time, they connect spatial, temporal, and symbolic paradigms. In them, memory and space are intertwined. This connection results in a different understanding of space and of crossing and blurring spatial and temporal barriers.

This place of attachment and belonging, our home, often gains significance only due to memories of lost intimacies. The temporal aspect fills a place with a utopian idea of home, which often finds its expression in nostalgia and, on a more negative side, in homesickness. The significant role of time for a sense of belonging and home is derived from the power and impact of selected memories of the past and dreams of the future with regard to the perception of home. Nevertheless, the irreversibility of time in relation to the concept of home is often neglected in favour of the attachment to a particular location, even though home and longing for home are frequently connected to a different temporal sphere. Nora’s *lieux de mémoire* marry the spatial and temporal aspect of collective memory.

The concentration on the distinguishing aspect of *lieux de mémoire* and especially Nora’s focus on national cultures create a rather demarcating element. The impending confirmation of national myths and idealism supports the understanding of culture as an excluding social space that is clearly separated from other cultures. However, this does not take modern developments of the cultural term (as proposed above), mobility, and cultural hybridity into consideration. It, therefore, needs to be treated with care. While Nora focuses on the nature of *lieux de mémoire* with regard to distinguishing different cultures due to their past, postcolonial studies focus on how identity can break down existing power structures based on national states as well as

¹⁸ ‘[...]die Erinnerung festigen und beglaubigen, indem sie sie lokal im Boden verankern[...]

(Assmann, 1999, p.299).

desirable hybridity. Within the postcolonial scope, Bhabha redefines identity against the backdrop of increasing migration and mobility; he argues that the location of difference is not between cultures but is rather situated within the cultural identity itself (Bhabha, 1994, p.233). This paradigm provides new challenges to the notion of home.

Modern developments of increased mobility, placelessness, homelessness, and cultural hybridity require a new orientation towards space as a theoretical concept. They also need the spatial aspect of collective memory and home to be reconsidered. Networks of social interactions, hybrid cultural productions and practices stand in contrast with that of the traditional, static understanding of space. However, place, as an anchor and basis for identity construction, remains highly significant. Within the context of migration and the potential for cultural hybridity, such places are often lost or believed to be far away. The constant encounter with places of transition and the resulting transitional identities of migrants (and in fact, of contemporary societies that are honeycombed and characterised by mobility) can cause a counter-reaction: a so-called rediscovery of the local, which consequently leads to a focus on idealising feelings of home as a natural attempt to stabilise identities (Appadurai in Bachmann-Medick, 2009: 296). Home as a stabiliser of identity seems to be in contrast with the situation of migrants who are often exposed to the transitional aspects of cultural hybridity.

The cultural dimension of home that is directly connected to collective memory includes language, history, traditions, and values. MacGregor Wise (2008, p.19) explains the link between home and culture by suggesting that the process of home-making is a process of meaning-making, of traditions and experience. Therefore, home can be construed as a domain of cultural identity. Clifford Geertz's approach of primordial attachments, which includes givens, such as assumed common blood ties, race, language, religion, region, and customs, are often used to describe the establishment of identity (Geertz, 1994, pp.29-34). As mentioned before, his analysis of cultural identity falls within an understanding of culture that is difficult to maintain with the increasing mobility of people and, in fact, may pave the way for racist ideas and behaviour. Nevertheless, the (assumed) cultural ties still affect people's perceptions and experiences of home, especially in a foreign environment. The connection between home and language may be one of the strongest aspects of the cultural dimension of home. The familiar sound of one's own language often creates an instant feeling of belongingness, security, and comfort. In addition, every honest

traveller – as cosmopolitan as he or she might be – would admit the immediate feeling of familiarity while hearing languages that they are accustomed to. Benedict Anderson (2006) highlights this by saying that ‘there is a special kind of contemporaneous community which language alone suggests’ (Anderson, 2006, p.145). In today’s world with its seemingly limitless mobility, language is even more important, as it distinguishes between home and a foreign place. As a major factor constituting a common culture, language has a profound impact on culture and, therefore, on the sense of home. Another important aspect of a common culture that influences the concept of home is the common history that connects the people of one culture.

Anthony Smith emphasises the importance of a common repository of historical events, myths, heroes, and memories (Smith, 1991, p.65). Traditions are often indicators of home, which ultimately link essentialist views on culture to the concept of home. The attempt to protect traditions can be seen as a sentimental act of defending values and the home itself. Smith (1991) and Jarausch (1997), among other authors, stress the importance of shared traditions for a connecting cultural identity and therefore a shared feeling of belongingness. These aspects are not necessarily connected to exclusivity or superiority claims but rather to habituation and familiarity, and they are generally experienced across borders of social classes. The home discourse, therefore, buttresses group identity. This interplay of identity and difference relates home to collective memory. Collective memory has often been related to concepts of identity (see Halbwachs, 1992; Nora, 1996; Assmann, 1988, 2000, 2011). Indeed, collective memory, with its quality of inclusion and exclusion, demonstrates features of the process of identity construction. To some extent, collective memory catalyses the process of *othering*. Jan Assmann substantiates this assumption by characterising collective memory as ‘concretion of identity’¹⁹ (Assmann, 2007, p.39). Moreover, Nora’s *lieux de mémoire* are demarcation points for groups as well as reference points for their memory and identity. Collective memory is tied to its carriers and cannot arbitrarily be transferred to other people. Thus, it proves the belonging to a particular group and, therefore, influences the process of identity construction.

However, the construction of such groups or, rather, collective identities based on collective memory is controversial. For example, Reinhard Kreckel suggests that only individuals can develop an identity, while groups, societies, and nations cannot.

¹⁹ Arslan uses the adjective ‘identitätskonkret’ (Assmann, 2007, p.39).

Identities are coined by individual memories. Nevertheless, individuals can identify with their ‘we-group’, which in turn can result in social integration and solidarity behaviour (Kreckel, 1994, pp.13–20). This identification with a ‘we-group’ may result in a sort of collective identity, which is based on inclusion and exclusion even more than individual identity. Such normalising constructions involve the danger of functionalising the notion. Doßmann and Niethammer, thus, harshly criticise this understanding of collective identity and even call collective identity ‘secret sources of uncanny conjuncture’²⁰ (Doßmann and Niethammer, 2000). In their understanding, also supported by Jürgen Straub (1998, p.99), collective identity and any discussion about it should immediately be under ‘ideological suspicion’ (‘Ideologieverdacht’). However, Jan Assmann postulates that collective identity is based on the identification of individuals and does not exist per se but depends rather on the level of affirmation by individuals (Assmann, 2011, p.114). This alternative is also supported by Kreckel (1994). In other words, collective identity can be understood as implicit, tacit knowledge. According to these approaches, collective identities are constructs consisting of common understandings of the self as well as the world and are reflected in collective practices (Assmann and Frieze, 1999, p.103). Traditions, perspectives, values, and norms are formed within the frame of collective identities based on collective memories. Collective identities are, thus, not everyday identities (Assmann, 2011, p.41). They are transferred, reinforced, and influenced via cultural media, such as texts, drawings, rituals, and even films.

1.5 Searching for a Home in a Cultural Hybrid Context

Home is often considered a given and is rarely reflected upon. However, the longing for home increasingly gains intensity, while the implicitness of home vanishes cumulatively in our globalising world. Despite different understandings of home and the changes the concept of home underwent and is going through, the sense of home and the accompanying feeling of safety, belonging, and habit is a basic human need. Home is what keeps us together, and I can only agree with Bachelard in his opinion that:

²⁰ ‘Heimliche Quellen einer unheimlichen Konjunktur’ (Doßmann and Niethammer, 2000).

Without it, man would be a dispersed being. It maintains him through the storms of the heaven and through those of life. It is body and soul. It is the human being's first world (1994, p.7).

Home must be understood as a construct of various experience-specific, generation-specific, and age-specific aspects. The sum of these variables creates a home. The meaning of specific home features such as place of birth, family, and language has changed across generations. Due to the particular and individual combination of variables that are necessary to create a sense of home, only with great difficulty can home be transferred. Home is not simply a nation, place of birth, or one's own apartment. It comprises the entirety of the consciousness and memories, an intensive longing for a *better* place. 'Our home is our corner of the world... it is our first universe, a real cosmos in every sense of the word' (Bachelard, 1994, p.4). Vincent Vycinas, paraphrasing Heidegger, describes the phenomenon of home as 'an overwhelming, non-exchangeable something to which we were subordinate and from which our way of life was oriented and directed, even if we had left our home many years before' (quoted in Relph, 1976, p.39). Home, in fact, could be described as the limits that protect a felicitous space that assures and conveys comfort as well as familiarity and that is clearly marked off from surrounding areas.

The social construction of the concept of home is inherent; however, a particular personal and individual level has to be added. With its identity-constructing properties, collective memory can be understood as a supporting force in creating the feeling of home. Simultaneously, home, with its capacity as a reference point and social reference frame, plays an important role in the sustainable preservation of collective memory.

Numerous social scientists agree that collective identities are subject to extensive and thorough processes of redefinition, especially due to migration whether forced or voluntary (Assmann and Frieze, 1999; Assmann, 1999; Assmann, 2000; Eigler and Kugele, 2012; Moses and Rothberg, 2014). Moses and Rothberg suggest that the concept of collective memory and its prerogative that only 'discrete and homogenous cultures and social groups can become bearers of memory' (Moses and Rothberg, 2014, p.31) require a re-evaluation in a world marked by cultural crossings. Using the example of Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*, Aleida Assmann suggests that

modern life demands contravening traditional *lieux de memoire*. She suggests that 'family realms impede progress'²¹ (1999, p.301). She understands the mobile modern person as the counterpart to the traditional, place-bound person and as someone who completely cuts ties with spatial spheres. Moreover, she goes so far as to suggest that modern humans can only reach their full potential if they leave behind a value structure based on the past, places and archaic hierarchies (ibid).

The needs and longings that result in the feeling of home, with their important role in identity construction processes, nevertheless maintain a predominant role in identity, collective memory, and integration discourses. In a culturally hybrid realm, the concept of home entails the contradiction between Freud's 'uncanny' mobility and the familiar. Thus, the implicitness of home as dwelling, the place of belonging, a realm of memory is undermined within the hybrid frame of migration. Hybrid identities question the spatial manifestation of collective memory and home.

Home is often only truly experienced when that which we call home is missing or if something that is representing home is missing (Schlink, 2000, p.9; Zöller, 2015, p.9). Therefore, the polarity between home and the foreign is of utmost significance for the analysis of the term home. Both aspects gain relevance in relation to each other. In popular discourse, being abroad or the more extreme loss of home is frequently related to suffering and discomfort, whereas home is, in general, related to happiness and comfort. Often an outside threat creates a particular awareness of the significance of home. If people consider their home to be a faraway place, they are territorialising, and that longing for the absent home is a part of the home-making process.

The question is, are cultural hybridity and home irreconcilable contradictions? The last century was marked by extensive displacements, expulsions, and flights. Also today, many places in the world are too hostile for various reasons and force people to leave their homes. This violent sudden removal from one's home is often traumatic. However, it is important to highlight that distance frequently creates romantic and idealistic connotations, and therefore, disappointment frequently goes hand in hand with the dreams of home, as resulting expectations can rarely be completely fulfilled. The yearning for home, the homesickness, tends to develop after an involuntary or voluntary departure from home. This manifests itself in emotions of delusion and

²¹ '[...] Familienorte hemmen den Fortschritt' (Assmann, A. 1999, p.301).

heartbreak, as well as the lack of successful adaptation and acclimatisation to new conditions.

Clearly, cultural hybridity challenges the stability of home. Home (the image of a haven, which is often used with regard to home) implies a certain immobility, arrival at a destination, resting, refuelling. Migrants are frequently confronted with this apparent contradiction. Increased mobility has weakened the perceived indestructability of home. The absence of home can create a certain idealisation of the old home, which additionally increases the sense of loss. As humans, migrants long for such a place, a territorialisation of belonging, but reality seems unable to fulfil this desire. The resulting sentimentality and, in fact, the accompanying commercialisation additionally weakens the meaning of home as it gains exaggeration and over-exposure.

Beate Mitzscherlich suggests that the central experience of today's world is 'dis-embedding' (quoted in Zöller, 2015, p.164). For migrants, the polarities of here and there, the *self* and *other*, home and not home reach a moment that seems proof of their own validity and functionality. Minh-ha suggests that:

[h]ome for the exile and the migrant can hardly be more than a transitional or circumstantial place, since the "original" home cannot be recaptured, nor can its presence/absence be entirely banished in the "remade" home (1994, p.15).

Heidegger drew an even darker future for us in his *Letter on Humanism* by suggesting, 'Homelessness is coming to be the destiny of the world' (quoted in Coulson, 1997, p.1). The increased mobility of people, values, and practices weakens and destabilises the structures that were intended to grant a sense of homogeneity. The strange, the unknown threatens the feeling of home that seems to make it very difficult for migrants to recreate a home as they are in fact initially living amongst the unknown.

Migration creates a cultural terrain that is based on localism and transculturality at the same time. Bhabha's third space is constructed through tensions between traditional polarities such as *here* and *there*, the *self* and the *other*, majority and minority, stasis and movement. These tensions create new forms of belonging, which may disturb and in fact question the legitimacy of these polarities and fixed terms such as home.

Collective memory based on the migratory experience has a significant impact on the sense of cultural identity of migrants. As one artistic vehicle of migrants, films

by migrant filmmakers, including their artistic and aesthetic expressions, are similarly influenced by this collective memory. Likewise, as a transmitting medium, films affect collective memory as well. For second and subsequent generation migrants, collective memory takes on a slightly different shape. Their memories of their family's culture are somewhat indirect, translated, passed on. Marianne Hirsch introduced the term 'postmemory' for the collective memory of migrants' offspring, which in her words is:

[...] mediated not through recollection but through an imaginative investment and creation. [...] Postmemory characterizes the experience of those who grow up dominated by narratives that preceded their birth (Hirsch, 1997, pp.22–23).

This, however, only partially substantiates the migrant's realm of memory, as their surroundings in the new culture also affect their collective memory. Culturally hybrid identities, thus, are exposed to (at least) two different collective memories. Despite the character of the concept of home and collective memory that is based on exclusivity and the demarcation of a group from others and thus resulting in the 'illusion of boundedness' (Werbner, 2015, p.4), this basis of identity construction evolves and lives off cross-cultural intermixing, borrowings, and translations. In fact, one could say that cultural hybridity becomes part of the collective memory of mobile people such as migrants.

Within this sphere of intertwining, the migrant or exile advances to become a prime example of the cultural model defined by cultural hybridity. Migrants and those in exile are generally aware of various strategies of homemaking, ranging from unconditional assimilation to permanent alienation/otherness. Despite the obvious drawbacks and potential pitfalls and conflicts, there is equally an opportunity, as the multiple perspectives of migrant and cultural hybrids may allow the acquisition of self-reflecting abilities. These abilities are necessary in order to achieve an understanding of different cultures and ultimately contribute to positive integration, which in turn allows the constructive combination of the various aspects of different cultures. Connection and ties to the old home of the migrants impede the construction of a new home. However, is the loss of the old home really contributing to a potential failure of inclusion efforts? Or could migrants exhibit a new form of identity that is more tolerant and open across borders, with a new understanding of home? Can the *third space* allow

deterritorialisation, as an effect of living in between worlds, to result in reterritorialisation in order to make the 'unhomely' (Bhabha, 1994, p.9) and the in-between habitable and in order to create a new home? Through the analysis of Arslan's films, guided by my research questions, I intend to find answers to these questions. In order to provide constitutive factors for the film analyses, I will contextualise the body of research on Turkish-German cinema and Thomas Arslan in the following chapter.

2. FROM TURKISH-GERMAN CINEMA TO THOMAS ARSLAN

2.1 Preliminary Remarks

Turkish-German cinema can be considered, next to British-Asian and French-Maghrebian cinema, a leading example of the European migrant narrative. As, according to the film historian Thomas Elsaesser, Europe has become ‘multination, multi-religious and multi-ethnic’ (2015, p.21), the cultural observations of cinema are of key importance, since it is a medium directly influenced by the social circumstances of its production and with opinion-forming characteristics. As a matter of fact, the work of many contemporary Turkish-German filmmakers is characterised by a critical distance to their cultural influences, linked to the Turkish and the German culture, which tends to lead to the establishment of a third culturally hybrid perspective (see Bhabha, 1994; Welsch, 1999) on processes of migration and inclusion. Understood in this sense, cultural hybridity does not exclude experiences of differentiation and conflict, since they support a constant re-determination of societal and individual identity concepts in a dynamic process that releases creative potential.

Since the late 1990s, the academic interest in Turkish-German cinema has increased. Especially with regard to the development from a ‘cinema of duty’ to the ‘pleasures of hybridity’, various researchers have analysed Turkish-German films (Göktürk, 2000a and 2000b; Seeßlen, 2000; Mennel, 2002; Burns, 2006, 2007; Ezli, 2009; Berghahn, 2009, 2012, 2013; Hake and Mennel, 2012). Yet, research on films made by or about migrants is often restricted to the limiting theoretical frame that characterises migrants through their otherness. Thereby, the focus lies on the distinguishing factors rather than on what has been created as something new within a third space. Perhaps, this is one of the reasons why we speak of migrant cinema, which expects the filmmaker to speak for an entire cultural group rather than satisfy the essential characteristics of art, such as individuality. In a period of increasing migration, the cultural observations of film are of key importance, as it is a medium directly influenced by social circumstances of its production and with opinion-forming characteristics. Films by or about migrants are produced in the interstices of cultures as well as cultural practices and are a representation of the imagination of their filmmakers. They could be called narratives of identity as they reflect and live off the identities of filmmakers. Thus, the topic of belonging is often the focus of such

cinematic productions, which in turn allows us to make assumptions regarding the concept of home. As mentioned before, films can reach a wide audience by being shown repeatedly on the big screen, the television screen, via video streaming and online videos, which is wider than other media such as conferences and books. They also have the power to reach people in a more emotional way, making it possible to move them and influence their thinking. In fact, 'fictional films are able to unlock the viewers' hidden wishes and fears, liberate fantasies, and give material shape to shared moods and dispositions' (Kaes, 1992, p.x). In this sense, film has also been (mis-)used as one of the most effective propaganda tools throughout the last century by all political systems. Migrant films, their meanings, and effects are influenced by various aspects, including historical, political, social, and cultural conditions. Their nature of being born out of cultural hybridity and being a hybrid product themselves makes migrant films appropriate examples for analysing the field of tension between cultural hybridity and home, as they have the potential to reinforce the tensions between the home and the host society that bear upon the creation of a hybrid culture.

Film as a subject of cultural and socio-cultural examinations must be explored within the frame of its quality as mass media and its characteristic of stimulating further communication processes. Film as part of the cultural systems of modern society can, therefore, be seen as a medium of transmitting and maintaining collective memory (see also Erll and Wodianka, 2008, p.1). Taking the above into consideration, film and its observing nature play an important role in the process of producing social meaning and can be considered a 'semantic resource of the world' (Heinze, Moebius and Reicher; 2012, p.192). Nevertheless, filmic observations of society are a highly interpretative form of knowledge since they cannot be proven via structural conditions or other means of verifying. However, due to the scientifically uncontrolled and liberally expressive nature of films, potentially innovative paradigms diverging from predominant norms can be created, away from normative polarities. As an aural-visual medium, film has played, since the very beginning, a critical role in the construction of cultural, and in this case, collective memory. The analysis of films made by or about migrants provides new options in contrast to 'static notions of place and belonging and, ultimately, of cultural memory' (Eigler and Kugele, 2012, p.5).

Films of second or subsequent generation migrants simultaneously display a particular 'way of seeing (which) underscores the interstice, the spaces that are and fall between the cracks of the national and the transnational as well as other social

formations' (Moorti quoted in Cooke and Homewood, 2003, p.359). Films are not reducible to what is visible on the surface, 'but, rather, they are constructed by the very 'expressions' that are said to be (their) results' (Butler quoted in Fortier, 2000, p.6). Numerous aspects of migrant films are of great relevance, such as the extent and the ways in which materialisation of cultures manifests, the places of belonging that are products of combined competing identities, rivalling histories, and realities. These inquiries will provide fruitful points of departure for the development of new theoretical concepts of place and belonging, while also exploring how multiple approaches to the perspective of place and memory can enrich the study of cultural migration.

Through portrayal, interpretation, and performance, films have the potential to de-naturalise cultural identity and forms of belonging and thus allow for an in-depth analysis of these and related concepts. In line with Bhabha (1994) and Hall (1997), cultural performativity and, therefore, artistic products (including films) can be analysed with regard to how migrant experiences and their mere presence may question essentialist approaches to normative concepts, such as culture, identity, belonging, and home. Film has played an especially important role in creating the conditions of both the previous and current century, which makes it an appropriate artistic form to reflect and analyse phenomena created by migration and globalisation in contemporary societies. Filmic expressions, their narrative styles, creative modes as well as technical conditions are generally contingent on beginning, transition, and some sort of arrival, which describe their liminal character. Film is a cultural medium that does not merely reflect but also creates new worlds of perception and imagination. Films, as well as other cultural expressions, such as literature, also entail a more intangible side, 'the dream material' – artistic and poetic constructions that evoke feelings in us and that involve the world in which we live, including our values and beliefs.

The field of aesthetics deals with the nature of beauty and art in great detail. Here, I will only briefly outline the origin of a work of art. A work of art is created by and through the work of the artist; but at the same time, the work of art is the origin of the artist (Heidegger, 1986, p.7). The interdependency of the product and the creator generates something new, something that is not just a 'thing' but also a 'symbol' (Heidegger, 1986, pp.11-34). The artistic product gains its symbolism through this interdependency as well as through its release into the world. In other words, the actual

work of art is a hybrid with aspects of the artist, the artistic product itself, and the surrounding context and environment. Due to the involvement of the creator, his or her identity is reflected in his or her work of art.

There are various terms used for films by or about migrants, including, frequently, accented cinema or cinema de métissage. Laura U. Marks, in her book *The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment and the Senses*, defines intercultural cinema as a medium that ‘operates at the intersections of two or more cultural regimes of knowledge’ (2000, p.24). She continues by suggesting that such filmic expressions and meanings are created between cultures and should be analysed accordingly with the awareness of both cultures (ibid). Migrant films often deal with aspects of de-territorialisation in the spatial sense but also in the context of temporal, cultural, and/or social aspects.

This chapter is dedicated to providing a literature review in order to offer a critical overview on existing literature about Turkish-German cinema and Thomas Arslan and to contextualising Thomas Arslan’s oeuvre.

2.2 Turkish-German Cinema

The question that arises at the very beginning of the discussion about Turkish-German cinema is whether it is at all feasible to speak of a *genre* Turkish-German film, especially within the frame of a study that analyses the interdependence of cultural hybridity and home. Knut Hickethier proposes that ‘genres constitute contentual and structural assignments of film groups [...], they organise the knowledge about narrative pattern, themes, and motifs’²² (2001, p.213). Framing cinema made by and/or about Turkish-Germans is difficult and involves the potential of marginalising, especially as most filmmakers within this field are citizens of the country they live in and can no longer be considered as migrants. Film is often understood as a voice for minorities and the oppressed. Through filmmakers such as Fatih Akin or Tevfik Başer, the Turkish-German community in Germany found first a widespread awareness and then a natural spot within society. Films are capable of raising awareness of realities and problems especially when otherwise more or less hidden. The situation of Turkish-

²² ‘Genres stellen inhaltlich-strukturelle Bestimmungen von Filmgruppen dar [...], sie organisieren das Wissen über Erzählmuster, Themen und Motive’ (Hickethier, 2001, p.213).

Germans in Germany certainly belongs to such topics. However, films are an expression and critique of living conditions, a portrayal of attitudes, and an offer for communication on various levels connected to stereotypes, clichés, and prejudice (see Blaicher, 1987). The problem here lies in the expectations of the audience. Instead of exploring aesthetic and creative potentials, recipients generally expect a real-life documentary (Neubauer, 2011, p.1). With its audio-visual capacities, film has pushed the topic onto the ‘screen’ of Germans. Therein lies the fundamental problem. The nature of art emphasises individuality and uniqueness, while filmmakers of minority groups, which include migrants, are expected to function as a voice for their group. This pushes them into a genre from the outside, which in essence enforces the construction of binary oppositions and thereby essentialist paradigms. Along these lines, Morith Dehn suggests - not free of sarcasm:

Films by directors with Turkish origins, as critics unanimously suggest, deal with these topics [conflicts of younger Turkish-Germans] in various ways – stories, as they have not been told before and with an “exotic” appeal, with which they set themselves apart from the monotony of German productions. A new genre was born and finally a new drawer labelled.²³ (1999)

Geib and Köhler (2000, p.98) suggest that there is no ‘common direction among Turkish-German filmmakers as their strength lies within their great variety of styles and narratives’ (2000, p.98). Nevertheless, I suggest that certain recurring motifs and themes can be detected. First and foremost, migrant filmmakers very commonly stage their films in a metropolis such as Berlin (for example, Thomas Arslan’s Berlin trilogy, 1997, 1999, and 2001; Sinan Çetin’s *Berlin in Berlin*, 1992; and Kutluğ Ataman’s *Lola and Bilidikid*, 1999) and Hamburg (for example, Fatih Akın’s *Short Sharp Shock*, 1998; Tevfik Başer’s *40 Square Meters of Germany*, 1986; Hark Bohm’s *Yasemin*, 1988; Hussi Kutlucan’s *Me Boss, You Sneakers*, 1998; and Yüksel Yavuz’s *April Children*, 1998). This is a rather interesting fact, which may be caused by a conglomeration of Turkish-Germans in bigger cities (Berlin is often regarded as the

²³ ‘Filme türkischstämmiger Regisseure, so die einhellige Kritik, arbeiten sich variationsreich an diesen Themen ab - mit Geschichten, wie sie bisher noch nicht erzählt wurden und mit einer »exotischen« Anziehungskraft, mit der sie sich vom sonstigen Einerlei deutscher Produktionen abheben. Ein neues Genre war geboren und endlich eine neue Schublade beschriftet’ (Dehn, 1999).

third biggest Turkish city in the world) and certainly influences the general perception and *flavour* of these cities. The locality of a big city, however, is also often connected with anonymity and openness. These might provide a more sterile place for the discussion of these topics. Due to the multifaceted lifestyles and cultures present in big cities, the *dominant* lifestyle and culture does not obstruct the view as much, and furthermore, the audience's level of acceptance may be more open as metropolitan cities are often seen as a synonym for progress. Furthermore, artists such as Yasemin Şamdereli, Yüksel Yavuz, Fatih Akın, and Thomas Arslan had similar paths as filmmakers – first entering the floor of wider audience attention with films that predominantly dealt with the intercultural struggle of the protagonists. Nevertheless, this constructed categorisation, as a genre, denies these films and artists their natural fluidity and creative potential. In essence, genre classifications give way for comparison regarding the development of individual Turkish-German filmmakers, yet it is necessary to acknowledge the quality of the term *Turkish-German cinema* as an auxiliary term (see Löser, 2004; Schick, 2010). The use of such auxiliary terms and, in fact, categorisations can be considered within the context of its discursive origins. Yet, they must always be regarded as referential and descriptive (see Blythe, 1993). As Blythe puts it:

Naming (i.e., Self/Other) is deeply imbedded in all genres, from fantasy to political economy, travel writing to history, ethnography to literary theory [...] Moral: to name is to 'own', and to own is to forget origins (Blythe, 1993, p.223).

The danger here lies clearly in the attempt to approach culture, cultural particularities, and traditions normatively and in neglecting socio-cultural, socio-political, and individual contexts. A post-structuralist approach may help to avert such a danger and thereby allow the use of the term *Turkish-German cinema* or *Turkish-German film* for making careful comparisons among films by Turkish-German filmmakers and generalisations regarding the development of Turkish-German cinema over time. With regard to the period of time, between the early 1990s until the early 2000s, in which the films this research will focus on were produced, I believe it makes sense to speak of Turkish-German cinema. As most of the Turkish-German filmmakers of that time started by aligning their work with other films by filmmakers with Turkish-

German roots, I will follow Löser's (2004) and Schick's (2010) approach and use *Turkish-German cinema* as an auxiliary term in order to facilitate comparisons and analyse Arslan's development as director.

The analysis of the concept of home in Turkish-German cinema is rare. Daniela Berghahn approached the topic via the examination of the connection between German Heimatfilm and Faith Akin's explorations of home and came to the conclusion that while the Heimatfilm genre describes home as a rural idyll as a counterpart to modernity worth striving for, Akin's films' focus on a home is marked by displacement and suffering of longing (Berghahn, 2006). Yet, the changing understanding of home and the potential of cultural hybridity to create new directions for the home-making process in general and in particular in Thomas Arslan's films have not yet been explored.

According to Thomas Elsaesser, the Turkish-German films are the most significant within the migrant cinema landscape in Germany, as there is an 'extended ethnic definition of regionality' (Elsaesser, 1999, p.14; see also Elsaesser, 2015, pp.17–32). The Turkish migrant group is the largest in Germany and potentially the most self-confident and present one in the German cultural scene today. As the Turkish guest workers and their families began to settle, German filmmakers started to discover them as subjects of their films; further, they also started to express themselves on screen. With growing integration, Turkish-German filmmakers became increasingly self-confident. Thus, despite its rather short history in Germany, Turkish-German film has developed extensively.

Deniz Göktürk described the transition from a 'cinema of duty' to the 'pleasure of hybridity' (2000a), followed by numerous publications (for example, Burns, 2006; Ezli, 2009; Mennel, 2002; Hake and Mennel, 2012) that described this development often within a normative polarity. Such writings paved the way to studies that relied on gender and sexuality to describe cultural differences and change (Göktürk, 2000a and 2000b; Mennel, 2002) as well as spatial politics as a basis for reformulating Turkish-German identities (Mennel, 2002; Gallagher, 2006). Yet, these works tend to fail to abandon exclusionary and normative spectrums of culture.

Historically, German cinema has always been filled with migrant representatives – migrants who worked/work voluntarily or involuntarily due to economic, political, or cultural reasons in Germany and not in their country of origin. Many early stars of German cinema were migrants such as Asta Nielsen, Pola Negri,

and Lilian Harvey. These golden stars of the silent film and the early sound film era were often symbols of the pomp and circumstance of German cinema before the National Socialists took over in 1933. The period between 1933 and 1945 was marked by the *aryanisation* of German cinema, yet some migrant stars such as Zarah Leander or Rosita Serrano, who were integrated symbols of the German *Revuefilm*²⁴, were still allowed to work and live in Germany as ‘no one else could sing about the longing for “home” in such a heart-rending manner’²⁵ (Göktürk, 2000c, p.329). After 1945, the international representatives of German cinema include the Italian director Roberto Rossellini who filmed several so-called ‘Trümmerfilme’²⁶ (rubble or ruin films) in the post-war Germany, Caterina Valente who helped in inducing the newly found German attachment to Italy of the 1950s, and Pierre Brice who portrayed the German novel hero Winnetou, just to name a few. The 1960s saw the development of a social-realistic cinema²⁷, which inspired some filmmakers of that time to produce films which were the first to deal with migrants in Germany.

Shortly after the recruitment agreements migrants were occasionally represented in theatre and literature, yet film, at first, completely ignored migration as part of social reality in Germany. According to Löser:

A voice which could be identified as Turkish or other ethnicities in German cinemas did not exist up until the 1980s. [...] Moreover, the topic of

²⁴ A German film genre that essentially brought the operetta on screen and in this sense were characterised by the integration of music and dance. These cheerful, sometimes mindless, sometimes frivolous, entertainment films had their most successful time in the period of Nation-Socialism in Germany. Examples are *Premiere* (1937) and *We Make Music* (1942) (see Koebner, 2014).

²⁵ ‘niemand konnte so herzbewegend von der Sehnsucht nach der Heimat singen’ (Göktürk, 2000c, p.329).

²⁶ The term ‘Trümmerfilm’ refers to German films produced by DEFA, the state-owned film studio in the German Democratic Republic, as well as in the Western occupation areas between the end of Second World War and the founding of the German states. These films, using the setting of the ruins of Berlin, try to come to terms with the recent unspeakable past in Nazi-Germany. Films such as Wolfgang Staudte’s *Murderers among Us* (Die Mörder sind unter uns) (1946) and Gerhard Lamprecht’s *Somewhere in Berlin* (Irgendwo in Berlin) (1946) dealt with the topics of guilt and conscience of the former Nazi regime in an authentic, nonchalant way (Greffath, 1995).

²⁷ Among the representatives of this social-realistic cinema in Germany are Edgar Reitz (for example, *Lust for Love*, 1967), Alexander Kluge (for example, *Yesterday Girl*, 1966) and in the second generation Werner Herzog (for example *Land of Silence and Darkness*, 1971), and Rainer Werner Fassbinder (for example, *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul*, 1974). The so-called Oberhausener Manifest (1962) is often seen as the beginning of this socio-critical phase of German cinema, with which several filmmakers declared to move away from conventions and commercial interest in order to create more freedom for filmmaking (Gass and Eue, 2012).

intercultural confrontation and integration was virtually not featured in German films for decades²⁸ (2004, pp.130-131).

In the end of the 1960s, the guest workers²⁹ start to appear in German films. *Until the End of All Days* (Franz Peter Wirth, 1961), can be considered as one of the earliest films dealing with the topic of migration. These early films often dealt with the topic of otherness and exclusion. In general, migrants are portrayed as individuals without families and without rights, who are subject to unbearable working conditions, as for example Abel in Beauvais' *The Accident* (1968) had to suffer from. Through these films, the directors attempted to raise awareness of the exploitation of guest workers and to initiate a discussion about their rights. However, according to Koebner, the audience was not ready for such a reflective debate (1975, p. 40). With the Greek *Jorgos Katzelmacher* (1969) Fassbinder depicts a mute migrant, who is exposed to the (violent) rejection of a xenophobic society. In *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul* (1973) Fassbinder describes a more differentiated analysis of the elderly widow Emmi and the Moroccan guest worker Salem. This film is widely understood as one of the first films, which deal with the actual living conditions of migrants (Reinecke, 1995, p. 12). According to Blumentrath et al. Fassbinder thereby expresses '[...] the fragility of politics, which is based on a binary juxtaposition of [German] citizens and foreigners, the self and the other'³⁰ (2007, p.87).

These films were often characterised by a clear delineation between the two worlds, the German and the migrant universe. The earlier films about migration in Germany were generally made by filmmakers with German roots and habitually dealt with the topics of exclusion and exploitation (Coulson, 1997). Migrants were portrayed as victims on the margins of society. The focus of these films was often oppression and otherness to underline the cultural polarity of the Turkish and German. These films follow the tradition of social-realistic cinema. Yet, they draw from cultural stereotypes, which are often exaggerated in order to highlight the suffering of the protagonists and

²⁸ 'Eine als türkisch identifizierbare Stimme innerhalb des deutschen Kinos gab es bis in die mittachtziger Jahre ebenso wenig wie die anderer Ethnien. [...] Mehr noch: das Thema interkultureller Konfrontation und Integration kam im bundesdeutschen Film über Jahrzehnte quasi nicht vor' (Löser, 2004, pp.130-131).

²⁹ In German, the term *Gastarbeiter* (guest workers) was frequently used to describe migrant workers, who came, especially in the 1960s and 1970s, to West Germany as part of a guest worker programme.

³⁰ 'die Brüchigkeit einer Politik aus, die auf einer binären Gegenüberstellung von In- und Ausländern, Eigenem und Fremdem basiert' (Blumentrath, et al., 2007, p. 87).

induce a normative identification with the aim of drawing attention to the neglected inclusion of migrants (see Hake and Mennel, 2012).

Traditional cultural paradigms and structural thinking of homogenous, delineated cultural identities brought the focus of films about migration of this time to the differences between Germans and migrants and exclusion. With the probably well-intended purpose of calling attention to the problems faced by *guest workers* in the former Federal German Republic, they in fact enforced the differences between German culture and the culture of the foreign workers as well as the thinking in differences due to the qualities of film (mass medium and combination of visual and audio effects). However, over the years, the cinematic expressions in Germany started questioning structural norms, traditional understandings of culture as well as the homogenous culture of origin. They slowly started to get acquainted with concepts such as interculturality. In the tradition of a 'cinema of duty' (Malik, 1996, pp.202-215), these films attempt to make the lives of Turkish people more tangible to Germans by leaning on and even enforcing an essentialist view on culture. An awareness of different cultures and the living conditions of minority groups is often reached through the use of stereotypes to make something strange more familiar as it is, to some extent, shared by a larger group of people.

Later, the oppression due to cultural norms and values (for example, the treatment of women) gained centre stage within Turkish-German cinema. Films such as *Shirin's Wedding* by Helma Sanders-Brahms (1975) focus on the differences between the two worlds and the alienation caused by these differences. *Shirin's Wedding* (1976) tells the story of a woman, who is a twofold victim: the victim as Turk and the victim as woman. For the first time, the situation of migrant women is the centre of a film in Germany. Even though the film is an integral part of migration history in Germany, Bulut criticises the combination of the then developing feminist movement and the situation of Turkish migrants in Germany by suggesting 'as a result of Shirin becoming a victim of her own "break-out", the film confirms the patriarchic principal'³¹ (2000, p.257). The metaphor of closed rooms emphasises the perceived helplessness and entrapment.

³¹ 'Dadurch, daß Shirin Opfer ihres „Ausbruchs“ wird, bestätigt der Film unbeabsichtigt das patriarchalische Prinzip' (Bulut, 2000, p. 257).

In this sense, the portrayal of migrants in films of the 1970s in Germany is characterised by victimisation and cultural differences and the lack of other options for migrants is highlighted. Seeßlen notes:

In the seventies, the new German cinema started to deal with “guest workers” and their fate with a mix of solidarity, curiosity and a pinch of caring ignorance. Only few films tried to comprehend the dichotomy in self-identification³² (2002, p.11).

These films’ goal is the display of the differences and problems, not the attempt to find solutions. Göktürk describes the early cinematic portrayal of migrants as an expression of discomfort, as in these films, ‘the attack on national culture by foreigners, which is understood as provocation, is displayed’³³ (Göktürk, 2000c, p.329). In these films, often, the *good* German supports the Turkish victim. Thus, even though open-mindedness and intercultural dialogue are the pretence, they enforce stereotypes and therefore the victimisation of migrants. The apparent superiority of German culture caters to the German audience while attempting (again by pretending to be open-minded and fighting for the minorities) to fulfil the audience’s needs and thereby underlining German domination.

The early 1980s are still mainly characterised by directors of German origin, for example, Rüdiger Nüchtern’s *Night of Wolves* (1981). Hark Bohm in his *Yasemin* (1988), as one of the first, focuses on second-generation migrants and their life in-between cultures. In the later 1980s, filmmakers of Turkish origin, such as Tevfik Başer, started to portray the lives of Turkish migrants in Germany. For the most part the fictional films and documentaries of this decade depict a grim image of the Turkish migrant as merely tolerated, exploited, oppressed, and humiliated (for example, *40 Square Meters of Germany*, 1986). A life in various cultures at the same time is described as impossible, conflict-laden and eventually results in failure. Hamid Naficy

³² ‘In den siebziger Jahren begann sich das neue deutsche Kino um die "Gastarbeiter" und ihr Schicksal zu kümmern, in einer Mischung aus Solidarität, Neugier und einer Prise fürsorglicher Ignoranz. Nur wenige Filme versuchten damals schon, die Spaltung in der Selbstidentifikation nachzuvollziehen’ (Seeßlen, 2002, p.11).

³³ ‘Es wird der Angriff auf die nationale Kultur durch Fremde, der als Provokation empfunden wird, gezeigt’ (Göktürk, 2000c, p.329).

(1999; 2001) underlines the frequent use of claustrophobic rooms as a metaphor for the niche, the place migrants are forced into (for example, *Yasemin*, 1988).

In essence, according to a temporal development, the Turkish-German cinema of duty of the first years, which was more often made by Germans and not by the Turkish or Turkish-Germans (see Fassbinder's *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul*, 1973; Sanders-Brahm's *Shirin's Wedding*, 1976), and the later films, which were more often made by Turkish-Germans and, in my understanding, can be counted towards the 'cinema of the affected' (Burns, 2006 and 2007), such as *Farewell to False Paradise* (Başer, 1989) and *Yasemin* (1988) very much demarcate migrants, assigning them a position as an outsider. In other words, Bhabha's 'mute' Turkish guest worker (1990, pp.315-317), has been given a voice that is however merely a translation for the German society.

Also, Thomas Arslan himself describes migrant films of the 1970s and 1980s as based on an all-pervasive dichotomy of modernity and traditionalism – on one hand is the modern, enlightened Germany and on the other hand is the archaic, abiding-to-traditions Turkey:

Thereby the heterogeneities of the culture which has been judged as foreign are withheld and simultaneously the amalgamation and the result of the own (German) culture hidden and concealed³⁴ (Arslan, 1997).

Although this statement conforms to the writings of several researchers (Malik, 1996; Göktürk, 2000c; Burns, 2007; Mennel, 2010; Hake and Mennel, 2012), it relies on categorising and generalising, a habit that Arslan rejects himself (Arslan quoted in Basrawi and Mentrup, 1998). Nevertheless, early films about (and rarely by) Turkish migrants concentrated on problems. Any excitement about the creative potential of the intermingling of cultures was nipped in the bud. Among other researchers, Göktürk identified the film-funding habits in Germany as one of the reasons for such a victimisation of migrants and the enforcement of an essentialist understanding of culture (Göktürk, 2000c). While Elsaesser underlines the positive effects of German

³⁴ 'Das Verhältnis von Deutschen und Türken wird hierbei auf einen angeblich alles durchdringenden Gegensatz von Moderne und Traditionalismus verengt. Hierbei werden die Heterogenitäten der als fremd eingestuften Kultur unterschlagen und gleichzeitig die Vermischung und das Gewordene der eigenen (deutschen) Kultur verschwiegen oder verschleiert' (Arslan, 1997).

film funding, which gave marginalised groups, such as women and ethnic minorities, a voice (1999), Göktürk draws attention to the restriction to certain topics and questions of such subsidies. This resulted in the over-emphasis of clichés and stereotypes, creating a ‘reserve culture’³⁵ (2000c, p.333). Erdem even goes further by suggesting that:

This Turk bonus is actually nothing but a passive indifference and superficiality toward the culture of the others, whether out of ignorance or lazy complacency, cautious restraint or hesitation before a real discovery of the other culture (Erdem, 1989 p.438).

The 1990s and 2000s have seen the emergence of Turkish-German cinema as an integral part of post-unification German cinema and transnational European cinema – thanks especially to the proliferation of numerous film festivals, such as the Berlinale and the increasing frequency of awards won by Turkish-German filmmakers³⁶ (Löser, 2004, p.137; Hake and Mennel, 2012, p.10). Starting in the mid-90s, many more Turkish-German directors - especially women - present their debut films. Ayse Polat (*A Feast for Beyhan*, 1994), Seyhan C. Derin (*I am my Mother's Daughter*, 1996), and Aysun Bademsoy (*German Police Officers*, 1999) are among female directors, who are ‘expression of a double paradigm change’³⁷ (Löser, 2004, p. 134). In this time, also the term Turkish-German cinema started to substitute the terms migrant or guest worker cinema. Dehn speaks of a ‘German-Turkish cinema boom’ (1999).

Filmmakers who represent this transition in Turkish-German cinema generally belong to the second or even the third generation of Turkish migrants, who were mostly born in Germany. Among these are Fatih Akin (who is considered to be one of the most successful and innovative German directors), Thomas Arslan, Yüksel Yavuz, Seyhan Derin, Yilmaz Arslan, and Ayse Polat. Films such as Thomas Arslan's *Brothers and Sisters* (1997), *Dealer* (1999), and *A Fine Day* (2001), Kutluğ Ataman's *Lola Bilidikid* (1999), Fatih Akin's *Short Sharp Shock* (1998) and *Head-on* (2004),

³⁵ ‘Reservatskultur’ (Göktürk, 2000c, p.333).

³⁶ For example: Tervik Baſer's *40 Sqm. Germany* (1985): Silver Leopard of the International Film Festival Locarno; Hussi Kutlucan's *Me Boss, you Sneaker* (1998): Adolf-Grimme Preis Fatih Akin's *Short Sharp Shock* (1998): Adolf-Grimme Preis, *Head-on* (among others Goldener Bär, 5 Lolas in Gold, European Film Award); Thomas Arslan's *Dealer* (1999): FIPRESCI Award Forum of New Cinema.

³⁷ ‘Ausdruck eines doppelten Paradigmenwechsels’ (Löser, 2004, p.134).

and Yüksel Yavuz's *April Children* (1998) represent the newer, self-confident Turkish-German cinema with most of these films dealing with the bi-cultural background of their directors. However, compared to earlier Turkish-German films, such as *Yasemin*, *Shirin's Wedding*, or *40 Square Meters of Germany*, Rob Burns suggests that this cinema moves away from the cultural boundaries reinforced by the 'cinema of the affected' towards a 'transnational cinema' (2006, p.127). Göktürk (2000a) and Malik (1996, p.202-215) highlight the 'pleasures of hybridity' with regard to the potential of the new Turkish-German cinema. Moving away from topics that are supposedly connected to Turkish-German realities allows filmmakers and the audience to explore the interwoven aspect of the cultures.

The 1990s and 2000s also brought a new flavour to Turkish-German cinema – humour. Films such as *Berlin in Berlin* (1993), *Me Boss, You Sneakers* (1998), or *Kebab Connection* (2004) and later *Soul Kitchen* (2009) and *Almanya – Welcome to Germany* (2011) attempt to overcome strict cultural categorisation by exaggerating stereotypes and clichés. According to Berghahn (2012, p.22), '[t]he reappraisal of predominantly negative stereotypes went hand in hand with the attempt of second-generation filmmakers to move Turkish German cinema out of the ethnic niche into the mainstream'. By ridiculing such clichés, they create a persiflage of such stereotypes.

Thus, Turkish-German cinema made a shift towards issues stemming from the clash between varying cultural values and cultural compatibility. In addition, with the increasing involvement of migrant filmmakers, the individual experience of the migrant became the focus of a number of films. Yeşilada speaks of the 'Turkish turn' in Turkish-German filmmaking referring to ways of Turkish-German filmmakers to reflect their own cultural background (2008, p.74). With the movement towards more awareness and potential acceptance of issues regarding migrants in Germany, contemporary migrant films deal with the topic more critically, portray a more multidimensional image of the migrant's experience, and also question the success of integration. Today, migrant filmmakers produce a wide palette of films. In fact, thanks to widely-known and acknowledged filmmakers such as Fatih Akin, migrant filmmakers no longer produce their films out of the corner of marginality and enjoy a wider, varied audience. Tunçay Kulaoğlu even declared in 1999 that 'the new German film is Turkish' (1999). This may be a bit far-fetched; however, it underlines the emancipation of Turkish-German cinema and its move away from the art house niche.

The change of and experimentation with themes, genre³⁸ conventions, and registers have caused Turkish-German films to move beyond the typical migrant themes with focus on exclusion. Geib and Köhler see the shift from the first generation of Turkish-German filmmakers to the second and third generations as accompanied with a ‘different view’ on things that no longer celebrates the victimisation of Turkish-Germans but rather searches for new directions between cultures (Geib and Köhler, 2000, p.86). Considered further in an idealistic, perhaps utopian manner, this development may give way for films that are ‘beyond stereotypes, ideologies, prejudice [...] towards friends, strangers, countries and cultures’³⁹ (Farzanefar, 2007), creating a transnational cinema that is nurtured by the variety of cultural experiences and reflectively and self-reflectively provides ever-developing points of view.

As mentioned before, the genre question is problematic with regard to Turkish-German cinema. Speaking of a mouthpiece for diversity, in fact, confirms essentialist views on culture, as even Georg Seeßlen suggests that the characters in his ‘cinema du métissage’ are caught in the ‘no-man’s-land between the cultures’⁴⁰ (Seeßlen, 2002). Yet, the younger generations of filmmakers have literally gained more mobility. They, in fact, do not only live between cultures (the one that is lived *at home* and the one outside on the streets) but also between the respective traditions of these cultures. Thus, contemporary films tend to not only tell stories of being an outsider and not belonging, but also of the self-confidence that is necessary to break with expectations and traditions of their parents. One way of dealing with this double struggle seems to be the attempt to break open cultural, geographic, and even social boundaries with their films.

Turkish-German cinema has played a central role in the re-conceptualisation of European cinema, which includes the choice of themes, modes of production and presentation. Yet, as Thomas Arslan proposes, when asked whether Turkish-German film can play a similar role in Germany as, for example, Italian-American cinema with representatives such as Martin Scorsese in the US:

³⁸ This includes documentaries: e.g. Arslan’s *From the Distance* (2006), Önsöz’s *Haymatloz – Exile in Turkey* (2016), Akin’s *Polluting Paradise* (2012); road movies: e.g. Akin’s *Tschick* (2016); gangster films: e.g. Yıldırım’s *Chiko* (2008), Arslan’s *In the Shadows* (2010), or even the Western genre with Arslan’s *Gold* (2013).

³⁹ ‘Jenseits von Stereotypen, Ideologien, Vorurteil [...] gegenüber Freunden, Fremden, Ländern und Kulturen’ (Farzanefar, 2007).

⁴⁰ ‘Niemandsländ der Kulturen’ (Seeßlen, 2002)

Theoretically yes. But the preconditions are different. The US have always been an immigration country and have also seen themselves as such. Unlike Germany, which historically has, in fact, been an immigration country, but was never considered as such by German society. In this sense, ethnic minorities still have a different status and a different self-perception as they have in the US⁴¹ (quoted in Basrawi and Mentrup, 1998).

Deniz Göktürk suggests the existence of a new genre that pushes ‘geographic, national, cultural and filmic boundaries’ (2000c, p.331). According to her, such a genre has been labelled differently; Naficy uses the term ‘independent transnational cinema’ (1996, p.121), Shohat and Stam name it ‘postcolonial hybrid films’ (2013, p.42), while Göktürk goes with the term ‘world cinema’ (2000a). Today, an ethnic line cannot be drawn anymore for Turkish-German cinema since it is quantitatively and qualitatively much too complex to be described in such a limiting way (Löser, 2004). Turkish-German films are not necessarily restricted to Turkish or Turkish-German topics but also deal with topics apart from their creators’ ethnicity. Still, I hesitate to proclaim the existence of such a genre, as the liquid nature of hybridity with various influences impedes such categorisations, yet Turkish-German cinema has gained majority appeal as it has moved out of the niche. Turkish-German films of the last two decades, which include Thomas Arslan’s films, have the potential of providing new ways of thinking beyond fixed categories of culture, identity, and binaries of home and not home. Nevertheless, while speaking of global development towards postcolonial hybrid cinema, the danger lies again in neglecting local differences and thereby not taking into account the specificities of the cases at hand (see Göktürk, 2000c). Thus, I focus my research on a single Turkish-German director, taking the contextual dimension of his films into consideration.

⁴¹ Theoretisch ja. Aber die Voraussetzungen sind schon andere. Die USA waren schon immer ein Einwanderungsland und haben sich auch als solches verstanden. - Im Gegensatz zu Deutschland, das zwar historisch von jeher auch ein Einwanderungsland ist, sich aber nie so begriffen hat. Insofern haben ethnische Minderheiten in Deutschland immer noch einen anderen Status und ein anderes Selbstverständnis als in den USA (Arslan quoted in Basrawi and Mentrup, 1998).

2.3 Thomas Arslan, a Turkish-German Filmmaker

The linchpin of this thesis is Thomas Arslan, who is frequently referred to as a leading example of a second-generation Turkish-German filmmaker (see for example, Göktürk, 2000c; Löser, 2004). His body of work is multi-faceted and includes short films, feature films, documentaries, and genre films. Thomas Arslan's films were chosen for this analysis as they reflect a particular affinity for the subject of belonging and transition. The main body of research on Thomas Arslan's films so far has focused on his Berlin trilogy. Thomas Arslan's oeuvre has almost always been analysed through an essentialist lens, specifically in the context of the identity of Turkish-Germans (see Mennel, 2002; Hake and Mennel, 2012; Ezli, 2009) that gets its acuity through monocultural paradigms, stereotyping, and clichés. Terms that have been associated with Arslan's films, such as 'accented cinema' (Naficy, 2001), 'cinema de métissage' (Seeßlen, 2000), or cinema of 'double occupancy' (Elsaesser, 2005, pp.108-130) share the understanding of an encounter or clash between different cultures; therefore, they are derived from an essentialist train of thought. Furthermore, the notion of home and its development in a cultural hybrid context have so far been neglected by studies on Thomas Arslan's oeuvre. This study intends to close this gap of research.

Born in 1962 to a Turkish father and a German mother, Thomas Arslan is a Turkish-German director whose biography suggests cultural hybridity. He spent his first years in Germany, followed by several years in Turkey, and a return to Germany in 1972 (Löser, 2004, p.138). Hence, he was confronted with the reality of two different worlds in the early years of his life. On one hand, in Germany, he experienced his first socialisation, while on the other hand, it was in Turkey where he first gained experiences of school. Arslan's father was one of the Turkish men who arrived at Germany among the first migrant wave following the recruitment agreement from 1961 between the Federal Republic of Germany and Turkey. Arslan himself finished high school in Germany and began studying German Literature and Language in Munich at first but later switched to study directing at the German Film and Television Academy Berlin. Since his graduation, he has worked as a freelance screenwriter and filmmaker (Löser, 2004, p.138).

Thomas Arslan is a well-received, yet less-known representative of second-generation Turkish-German filmmakers. In the tradition of auteur cinema, Arslan's

films reflect a rather personal and intimate perspective of migrants. His oeuvre underlines a particular interest in questions of home, belonging, and cultural hybridity, which is often reflected by the motif of transition. Arslan's early films lack an obvious connection with his migrant background. During his film studies, he produced the short film *At the Edge* (1991), which portrays villages and towns on the former inner German border between the German Democratic Republic and the Federal Republic of Germany. A few years later, in 1994, he completed his first full-length film *Turn Down the Music*, which can be understood as a social study of youngsters in Essen in the 1990s and their fears with regard to their future. The film *At the Edge* explores the transition from two Germanys to one, and *Turn Down the Music* critically interrogates the transition to a new stage of life (Löser, 2004; Abel, 2012). He describes his fascination with these often grey, undefined zones as '[p]laces which are no longer what they used to be but not yet something else'⁴² (Thomas Arslan quoted in Löser, 2004, p.138).

His next artistic endeavour was his so-called Berlin trilogy, *Brothers and Sisters* in 1997, *Dealer* in 1999, and *A Fine Day* in 2001. Here, for the first time, he touches on multicultural topics. The protagonists of all three films are Turkish-German, and these films are set in Berlin. With this trilogy, he confirms his tendency for a cinema that observes rather than narrates. While *Brothers and Sisters* still contains some autobiographical aspects, the two subsequent films of the trilogy portray young people of Turkish background in Germany as individuals and not as part of an ethnic group, refraining from using publicly accepted cultural stereotypes and elements. His next film was the documentary *From the Distance* (2006), which dramatises a trip taken by Thomas Arslan across Turkey. However, his film *Vacation* (2007) does not reveal the director's Turkish background at all; in fact, it revolves around a semblance of a family idyll that is often connected, especially due to the Heimat film genre, to rural, traditional German life. Nevertheless, these five films suggest a particular journey and indeed a certain engagement on Arslan's part with regard to his background. After dealing with the lives of young German migrants, he returns to his father's country and then goes on to almost ridicule or pillory the German idyll. These films deal with a particular search for belonging, the character's point of reference, in other words their home. Arslan's following films *In the Shadows* (2010),

⁴² 'Orte, die nicht mehr das eine und noch nicht etwas anderes sind' (Thomas Arslan in Löser, 2004, p.138).

which could be filed under the classical gangster film genre, and *Gold* (2013), a Western film, slide more into the mainstream track than his earlier films. Yet, in both films, Arslan still remains true to his almost distant, observing style. Arslan's cinema does not explain, it observes.

The genre question of Turkish-German cinema is almost answered by Thomas Arslan's body of work itself, as he experiments with various different genres. Despite their rather low degree of audience recognition, these films are highly acclaimed by film critics in almost every aspect. The film historian Claus Löser declares Arslan to be one of the 'most auspicious representatives of German auteur film' (Löser, 2004, p.141). In fact, he has gained Europe-wide recognition by receiving the Max Ophüls Award in 1997 and the FIPRESCI Award of the Berlinale in 1999 for the film *Dealer*.

With regard to his development as a director and a screenwriter, *A Fine Day* represents the last fictional screenplay to deal with Turkish-Germans. It appears as if Arslan frees himself from a stereotypical niche with his documentary *From the Distance*. Again, his Turkish-German background seemed to have influenced his films that have firstly reached a broader audience. His following films no longer focus on the lives of Turkish-Germans. As the director and screenwriter of his films, Thomas Arslan is often understood as a representative of the German auteur cinema⁴³. This term is derived from the French Nouvelle Vague and often involves the inclusion of biographic traits, as the filmmaker intervenes more directly in the narration and portrayal of the story (Hickethier, 2001, pp.157-159). As a representative of German auteur cinema, which French journalists labelled 'Nouvelle Vague Allemande' (D'Estienne d'Orves, 2008), Arslan's films are characterised by 'highly stylized filmic devices' (Schick, 2010, p.143). His films are clearly connected to the European auteur cinema. His subjects and stories seem to draw from his very own experiences. His affinity for the French Nouvelle Vague shows firstly on an aesthetic level with formal conciseness that clearly rejects the mainstream. Yet, Arslan also explicitly references films by Rohmer. In *A Fine Day*, Deniz synchronises a shining example of the French Nouvelle Vague, *Conte d'été* by Rohmer. His affinity for this cinematic tradition is

⁴³ The auteur theory arose in the 1940s in France based on theories by Alexandre Astruc and André Bazin and was developed in order to answer the question about the intellectual property of films. In essence, this theory demands the merging of several producing activities, such as screenwriting and directing, in order to maximise creativity (see Koebner, 1990).

also proven by naming his production company Pickpocket Productions, as a reference to Bresson's film (1959) of the same name.

Telling spectacular stories is not Arslan's style. His films refrain from melodramatics as well as sensational scoops and instead explore everyday scenes with a very pronounced style. The audience often has to collect little crumbs of information in order to gain an insight into the backgrounds of the characters. Many of Arslan's films deal with people who attempt to flee from something or are at the edge of transition but are not yet quite sure where it will lead them. Places are very important elements in Arslan's films, despite the fact that they are often non-places without life. Thomas Arslan himself suggests that the places A and B are not the only important elements but also the journey between them (Seidel, 2001). The stories are often fuelled by the despair of protagonists in their search for happiness and belonging. In other words, the films' characters tend to feel that they are not at the right place, yet their search is somewhat undefined. Löser understands Arslan's work as shaped by several aesthetic principles:

The efficiency of his narrating does not get fed by the necessity of a causal plot construction but, to the contrary, by the insisting on observation, by the self-dynamics of places and movement. [...] He attempts to lift out apparent trivialities through filmic metamorphosis from ordinariness and thereby show the uniqueness of each human situation and constellation⁴⁴ (2004, p.138).

Indeed, Arslan's style is characterised by observation while elevating trivialities and thereby underlining the uniqueness of each situation. No single scene assumes paramount importance, which underlines an almost documentarian style creating the illusion of realism. Yet, his style contradicts established conventions of filmmaking and does not fulfil the expectations of the audience. He frequently intervenes in the film, telling his specific story. The maxim 'To make, rather than take, a picture' underlines Arslan's intention: to construct something new rather than represent it as it is (Abel, 2012, p.45).

⁴⁴ 'Denn die Effizienz seines Erzählens speist sich nicht aus der Notwendigkeit einer kausalen Plot-Konstruktion, sondern, im Gegenteil, aus dem Insistieren auf Beobachtung, aus der Eigendynamik von Räumen und der Bewegung darin. [...] Das scheinbare Banale will er durch die filmische Verwandlung aus der Alltäglichkeit heraus heben und somit die Einmaligkeit jeder menschlichen Situation und Konstellation aufzeigen' (Löser, 2004, p.138).

Arslan's oeuvre has often been analysed with regard to his affiliation to the Berlin School of filmmaking. In Gansera's words, Arslan was one of the founding members, next to Angela Schanelec and Christian Petzold, of this school of filmmaking (2001). These filmmakers are frequently connected due to their similar stylistic techniques. They prove a particular formal rigour and display a close relationship with realism (Abel, 2008, 2012, 2013; Schick, 2010). Marco Abel's research on Arslan's affiliation to the Berlin School is perhaps the most extensive one. He suggests that:

[m]any, though not all, Berlin School films are dominated by long takes, long shots, clinically precise framing, a certain deliberateness of pacing, sparse usage of non-diegetic music, poetic use of diegetic sound, and, frequently, the reliance on unknown or even non-professional actors who appear to be chosen for who they 'are' rather than for whom they could be (Abel, 2008, p.15).

These films avoid a classical suspense structure (Schick, 2010). Interestingly enough, the refusal of the Berlin School filmmakers to be pushed into a particular cinematic corner by rejecting the use of traditional cinematic techniques and themes and thereby creating a 'counter cinema' (Abel, 2008) results in connecting features and, in fact, a cinematic categorisation. Schick highlights the impression of realism that Arslan produces in his film and the impact of combining auteurism and filmmaking (2010). Arslan's films deal with the variety of German everyday realities; yes, he could be considered a seismograph of current German life conditions. The nearness of the filmmakers related to the Berlin School is not based on a jointly signed manifest or tied cooperation but rather on ideational and biographic similarities. In addition, the strict formality and certain topical fields are similar. In essence, all the filmmakers associated with the Berlin School are not primarily interested in financial success but rather in the aesthetics of everyday life (see, Schick, 2010 and Abel, 2013). They do not follow mainstream desires to reach as many people as possible but are rather limited to a small audience who is willing to indulge themselves in the film and appreciate the particular highly stylised devices (Schick, 2010).

Arslan's culturally hybrid background influences his films in a sometimes obvious, often hidden, way. The theme of transition is recurring, in one way or another, in all of his films. Nevertheless, he attempts to resist from being pushed into

stereotyping or the use of clichés. For example, he emphasises that his film *A Fine Day* is not a migrant film by clarifying, ‘I want to show a young self-confident Turkish woman who does not conform to the well-established headscarf cliché’ (Wewer, 2000). *A Fine Day* is supposed to be a light, self-evident film that is underlined by the following words by Arslan:

The film works with radiant, lush colours which visualise the shimmering summer feeling when the air is filled with ideas and feelings. [...] Deniz is not searching for her identity but for happiness. Turkish life in Berlin has long reached self-evidence⁴⁵ (Wewer, 2000).

Arslan frequently claims that he is not interested in being pushed into a particular niche or genre cinema and questions existing portrayals of Turkish-Germans in films. This is supported by his comment:

When persons with Turkish origins appear in German films, they are either exotic accessories, are instrumentalised for a subordinated discourse or are stylised to a one-dimensional victim. [...]. I mainly wanted to create a frame, which provides the people with presence to show people with very ordinary problems and contradictions without judging them⁴⁶ (Arslan quoted in Basrawi and Mentrup, 1998).

He thereby criticises the cinema of duty and suggests that his films should not be construed as part of a migrant genre apart from other German films. Nevertheless, numerous researchers have focused their analysis of Arslan’s oeuvre on the Berlin trilogy as it deals with the portrayal of Turkish-Germans and the development from a cinema of duty to a cinema of hybridity (Burns, 2002; Göktürk, 2000a; Mennel, 2002). Yet, I intend to demonstrate that his next fictional film *Vacation* can be understood as

⁴⁵ ‘Der Film arbeitet mit leuchtenden, kräftigen Farben, die das flirrende Sommer-Gefühl, wenn die Luft schwer von Ideen und Gefühlen ist, visualisieren, [...] Deniz ist nicht etwa auf der Suche nach ihrer Identität ist, sondern auf der Suche nach Glück. Türkisches Leben in Berlin, das hat seine Selbstverständlichkeit doch längst erreicht’ (Wewer, A., 2000).

⁴⁶ ‘Kommen Personen türkischer Herkunft in deutschen Filmen vor, so sind sie entweder exotisches Beiwerk, werden für übergeordnete Diskurse instrumentalisiert oder zu eindimensionalen Opfern stilisiert... Mir ging es in erster Linie darum einen Rahmen zu schaffen, der den Personen eine Präsenz gibt, Menschen zu zeigen mit sehr alltäglichen Problemen und Widersprüchen, ohne über sie zu urteilen’ (Arslan quoted in Basrawi and Mentrup, 1998).

the conclusion of the trilogy and, in essence, his *liberation* from migrant topics. This film so far has not been analysed in connection to the Berlin trilogy. Also, Arslan's development as a filmmaker with regard to his approach to home and belonging from *Brothers and Sisters* to *Vacation* has so far been neglected. Anke Leweke suggests that Arslan depicts a new, distinctive way of life and describes the lives of young foreign people whose sense of life can no longer be associated with the German, Turkish, or Turkish-German identity (2011). Georg Seeßlen attunes in this hopeful song of praise by noting that:

[d]irectors like Thomas Arslan and Fatih Akin have experienced both Turkish and German cultures and move as freely between them as possible. The German-Turkish film is thus an enrichment in terms of both dialogue between the cultures and the anticipation of a new culture of freedom (Seeßlen, 2000, p.42).

Also Rob Burns understands Arslan's oeuvre as a shift from a 'cinema of the affected' to a 'cinema of hybridity' (2007, p.375). Thomas Arslan also recognises a change in Turkish-German cinema⁴⁷ (in Basrawi and Mentrup, 1998). Abel goes as far as suggesting that:

[i]ntriguingly, it appears that Arslan's immigrant trilogy itself explicitly dramatizes the central conflict of this debate – of whether or not his films mark a significant change in the way German cinema depicts immigrants of Turkish descent (Abel, 2013, p.44).

Yet, Barbara Mennel's comparative analysis on *ghettocentrism* in Faith Akin's *Short Sharp Shock* (1998) and Arslan's *Brothers and Sisters* (1997) questions the change in the portrayal of Turkish-German identities in these Turkish-German films

⁴⁷ 'Was man auf jeden Fall beobachten kann ist, daß jetzt mehr Türken, insbesondere in Serien oder in Fernsehfilmen auftauchen, aber wenn man näher hinguckt, sind das doch wieder die üblichen Klischees. Gerade sind wohl ein paar Filme von türkischen Filmemachern und Filmemacherinnen in Arbeit, die wahrscheinlich zu anderen Resultaten kommen werden. Da muß man abwarten. Es scheint sich schon ein bißchen was zu tun.' (Thomas Arslan quoted in Basrawi and Mentrup, 1998).

of the late 1990s (Mennel, 2002). In fact, by pushing them into a ghetto (in Arslan's case, Berlin Kreuzberg and Hamburg Altona in Akin's film), equipped with a particular language often denoted as Kiezdeutsch and by criminalising them, the Turkish-Germans are marginalised and, thus, do not differ much from the earlier *mute* guest worker

Thus, I challenge the assumption that Arslan has left the topic of the search for identity in cultural, traditional patterns as suggested by Löser, who has attributed to Arslan the position as an outsider within the field of Turkish-German cinema (2004, p.138). Due to his affiliation to the Berlin School of filmmaking, Arslan consciously captures German realities and excels in transferring locally specific topics onto a universal level. Arslan does not restrict his focus on depicting the difficult life of migrants in Germany due to such factors as the lack of inclusion and cultural differences in a manner that is intended to create pity and is based on an essentialist view on culture. Rather, his films reflect a certain kind of everyday life with regard to Turkish-Germans living in Germany – an approach that may have more unifying and including effects than one that simply points out differences and struggles. In essence, the description of Thomas Arslan as a 'silent ethnographer of everyday life' used by the *Die Welt* journalist Antje Wewer sums up his corpus of work (Wewer, 2000). Göktürk suggests that Arslan's films reveal, through his way of observing and presenting their lives, a new mode of migrants and their descendants – the migrant as the 'modern metropolitan figure' (Göktürk, 2000b, p.65). Even though his Berlin trilogy certainly depicts a shift in the representation of migrants and their offspring, I cannot go along with Göktürk's overly optimistic understanding of Arslan's oeuvre. In my understanding, he still is trapped (certainly with his trilogy) with essentialist categorisations of culture and polarities of the *self* and *other*. In fact, he frequently uses stereotypes and clichés to emphasise the hybridity of his protagonists.

In order to trace the process by which notions of home and belonging are constructed within cultural hybridity, the following chapters will be dedicated to a thorough film analysis of four consecutive fictional films by Thomas Arslan. I intend to illuminate the third space of creation in which belonging and identities are understood as hybrid, fluid, and dynamic. Thereby, I shall attempt to understand whether the selected films offer new ways of depicting home and belonging. Thus, this study integrates critical discourse and film analysis with cultural and post-colonial

theories and aims to examine, through the medium of film, the notion of home within a culturally hybrid space.

3. HOME BETWEEN THE WORLDS IN *BROTHERS AND SISTERS*

3.1 Preliminary Remarks

In the early years of the *new* Turkish-German cinema and after *Turn Down the Music* (1994), Thomas Arslan filmed *Brothers and Sisters* (1997) as his second feature film. This film became the first part of Arslan's Berlin trilogy, for which the idea came up while producing the film (Arslan in Basrawi and Mentrup, 1998). With this film, Thomas Arslan for the first time as a filmmaker approaches the topic of Turkish-Germans, in particular, the situation of young second-generation Turkish-Germans. In his role as director and screenwriter, Thomas Arslan had a significant influence on the direction, the production, and the setting of the film. When asked about his inspiration for *Brothers and Sisters*, Thomas Arslan said that he was 'discontent with how Turkish has been portrayed in German films so far' (Arslan in Basrawi and Mentrup, 1998)⁴⁸. While Denis Göktürk suggests that the film indicates 'a new mode of depicting immigrants and their hybrid offspring by following their diverging pathways through the neighbourhood' (2000b, p.65), Jessica Gallagher interposes that, in *Brothers and Sisters* (as in the succeeding film *Dealer*), the protagonists still struggle with the same problems as the migrant protagonists of earlier films (2006). The academic research on this particular film is often focused on the use of urban space (see for example, Mennel, 2002; Gallagher, 2006) and its potential for portraying a new kind of migrant who is no longer victimised. Even though the film (out of Arslan's oeuvre and alongside *Dealer*) has received the most interest by critics and researchers, the question of home and belonging in *Brothers and Sisters* has not yet been examined in depth.

Brothers and Sisters explores the identity formations of Turkish-German youngsters in Berlin Kreuzberg⁴⁹ as a slow-paced milieu study. The film describes the everyday life of three young siblings, born and raised in Berlin, who deal with their double ancestry in different ways. Their conflicts, disappointments, and dreams come

⁴⁸ 'unzufrieden damit, wie Türken bisher in deutschen Filmen dargestellt werden. Das war einer der Gründe, diesen Film zu machen' (Arslan quoted. in Basrawi and Mentrup, 1998).

⁴⁹ Berlin Kreuzberg is a neighbourhood in the area of the former West Berlin, which is particularly known for its relatively high percentage of migrants. In 1996, one year before *Brothers and Sisters* was released, 33.7% of the population of Berlin Kreuzberg was migrants or their offspring (Kleff, 1999).

to the surface on their seemingly aimless journeys through Berlin Kreuzberg. They have similar problems and longings as their German contemporaries in similar social circumstances. However, additionally, they are confronted with two different cultural value systems. *Brothers and Sisters* accompanies the two brothers Erol and Ahmed and their sister Leyla almost casually through Berlin Kreuzberg. Yüksel Yavuz's *April Children* (1998), which was released one year after *Brothers and Sisters*, portrays with Cem, Mehmet and their sister Dilan the same constellation of characters; however, his film is set in Hamburg. These similar starting points reflect the commonalities among films by Turkish-German directors of that time, as suggested before. The three siblings are of mixed descent: the father is Turkish and the mother is German. Thus, the descriptions of this family encapsulate the potential clash of cultures, which in essence has often been in the centre of earlier Turkish-German films. In *Brothers and Sisters*, however, Arslan plays with cultural categorisations rather than considering them as a given. All the siblings still live at their parents' flat. Erol, who has adopted Turkish citizenship, shifts rather aimlessly, without direction through life; Ahmed and Leyla attempt to escape from their Turkish surroundings and their family respectively and chose different paths to do so. Erol, as a Turkish citizen, is planning to do his military service in Turkey, which he finds less threatening than trying to make his life in Berlin. Ahmed, who is about to finish his A-Levels (Abitur), appears to be the most assimilated of the three siblings. The youngest of the three, Leyla, spends most of her time with her best friend Sevim and thereby tries to escape her family life.

Meticulously, the most profane everyday situations, such as getting ready in the bathroom or buying a bottle of coke, are presented on the same level as discussions on Turkish politics and the discrimination of foreigners. With his unagitated, plain narrative style, Thomas Arslan emphasises his affiliation to the Berlin School of filmmaking (see Chapter 2). In particular, the film frequently breaks with traditional film techniques, such as shot reverse shot, and does not culminate in a climax. No single scene is given more importance than the others. However, Thomas Arslan, as the director, steps on the stage on several occasions by violating expected filmic elements, in order to make the artificiality of the film visible for example. Arslan's narrative style tells the stories, circumstances, and identification models of the characters implicitly, rather than exposing them explicitly. Step by step, the audience learns about simmering conflicts, identity constructions, and lifestyles of the protagonists.

The fact that besides directing, he also wrote the script and was responsible for the cut in his film, can clearly be located in the auteur film genre. Arslan's style of long, almost still shots on the characters and the exclusive use of natural lighting emphasises the observational character and the sense of realism and immediacy of this film. At the same time, his unconventional use of cuts between camera shots, the limited use of artificial soundtrack, and exaggerated natural background noises as well as non-professional actors and simple narratives simultaneously estrange the audience from the film and emanates the feeling of artificiality.

His protagonists are Turkish-German, with a Turkish father and a German mother, which reflects autobiographic features, underlining the tendency of Turkish-German filmmakers to reflect their own lives. Arslan enforces this fact in the press sheet accompanying the film's cinema release:

I set out from familiar things. My father is Turkish immigrant, who came to Germany in the late 1950s. My mother is German. I am also a child of a German-Turkish liaison⁵⁰ (Arslan, 1997).

Thus, the struggle between inclusion and isolation, of being torn between German and Turkish influences of the protagonists, also reflects Arslan's experience. Certainly, particular to *Brothers and Sisters* is the portrayal of at least three different options for the search for belonging by Turkish-Germans in Germany. Thus, this does not restrict the protagonists to be victims of a culture that is supposedly not compatible with German values, as suggested in earlier Turkish-German films, which is typical for the cinema of duty. The search for belonging and home constitutes each sibling's journey in the film: Erol presumes his home in Turkey, Ahmed views education as his way to a home, and Leyla searches for her home in independence from her family.

By focusing on an ethnically mixed family, Arslan is able to juxtapose the two cultures. Nevertheless, while Neubauer suggests '[w]ith this family it is not possible to differentiate "German" from "Turkish"' (2011, p.282)⁵¹, I intend to demonstrate that, despite the mixed heritage of the siblings, Arslan portrays the differences of the

⁵⁰ 'Ich bin von Dingen ausgegangen die ich kenne. Mein Vater ist türkischer Immigrant, der Ende der 50ziger Jahre nach Deutschland gekommen ist. Meine Mutter ist Deutsche. Ich bin also das Kind einer deutsch-türkischen Verbindung' (Arslan, 1997).

⁵¹ 'Bei der Familie lässt sich 'Deutsches' und 'Türkisches' nicht mehr einfach auseinanderdividieren' (Neubauer, 2011, p.282).

cultures frequently by contrasting the two with his characters. The two brothers Erol and Ahmed each stand for the opposite side of a dichotomy: Erol is the Turkish citizen who attempts to be as Turkish as possible, and Ahmed does not care much about his Turkish heritage and, in fact, tries to deny it. Also, Leyla and her father can be seen as a contrasting pair. While Leyla at first sight represents modernity, her father stands for traditionalism. These relationships will be analysed in detail in sections 3.2.1 and 3.2.2 of this chapter.

3.2 Longing for Belonging between the Worlds

According to Katja Nicodemus, *Brothers and Sisters* is the first film that portrays young Turkish-Germans from their own perspective (1997). The film is certainly not an essay about young Turkish-Germans, but rather it is a sequel of everyday scenes, discussions, fights, and reconciliations. Arslan does not only narrate the lives of the three protagonists; he rather depicts their ‘rhythm’ (Leweke, 2011). With his three siblings in *Brothers and Sisters*, Arslan could not have chosen a more different set of characters, but they each certainly fulfil a particular task in the film. Erol, the eldest, represents the longing for his forefather’s culture as an anchor in life. Ahmed, on the other hand, could be seen as the complete opposite of Erol, as he apparently has assimilated considerably well into German culture. The youngest and the only girl, Leyla, seems to embody a middle path. However, they all struggle with their identities and search for a place of belonging, a home, yet they choose different ways to deal with the conflict.

The siblings are caught up in the ever-present tension and conflicts within their ethnic suburbs. As opposed to several earlier films by and about migrants (Başer’s *40 Square Meters of Germany*, 1986 in particular), Arslan does not confine his characters to the inside of flats or houses but allows them to manoeuvre around the exterior as well as interior spaces. Göktürk suggests that these shifts in the characters’ mobility go along with the development in Turkish-German cinema of that time (2000b, pp.64-76). At first glance, this new mobility seems to mark an act of liberation and even emancipation. Each sibling tries to escape from their family’s flat as often as possible. However, by taking a closer look, the constant movement of the three siblings and their encounters in grey corners still resonate confinement and contain the potential

for enforcing the conflict inside. They do not leave the familiar streets of Berlin Kreuzberg and move within a limited radius. Even though the three siblings deal with their conflicts differently, all of them are restricted to the space of Berlin Kreuzberg. At times, the streets are hazardous and emanate hostility, denying any sense of belonging. However, the natural mobility of the siblings suggests that they have somewhat come to terms with this fact. Within their space, now also the streets of Kreuzberg, they move naturally and are self-confident (at the most part), which opens up new options for negotiation for them. The strolls through their neighbourhood can be understood as a metaphor for the process of transition, which, however, does not involve arrival nor transformation due to the confining space of these living conditions and the resulting polarities. Thus, the exterior scenes enforce essentialist cultural categorisation, thereby preventing the burgeoning of the potential for cultural hybridity (see Spivak, 1993; Bhabha, 1994).

Setting his film in Berlin Kreuzberg, which could be called a melting pot of cultures (see for example, Lanz, 2007) clearly anchors *Brothers and Sisters* in the migrant milieu. In an almost documentarian manner, Arslan marks the district of Kreuzberg with street signs and station names. Thereby, he achieves the implication of realism. Multiculturalism is depicted as a natural part of Berlin. Whenever the protagonists stroll through the city, most billboards and posters, audible background conversations, and even music that can be heard through open windows are in the Turkish language. Arslan, thereby, highlights the Turkish presence and the influence of Turkish culture on the topography of Berlin as ‘the urban space in *Brothers and Sisters* is depicted as being as much “non-German” as it is ‘German’ (Gallagher, 2006, p.339). The first outside scenes of the film at the S-Bahn⁵² and the newspaper stand underlines this sensation of an apparently natural presence of Turkish culture in Berlin Kreuzberg particularly. When Ahmed leaves his family’s flat and embarks on his way to school, the dominant language in surrounding conversations and signs is Turkish, while the scenes at the family’s flat before would suggest German. To underline the influence of immigration on the landscape of the city, Arslan lets his camera focus on billboards in Turkish several times with still long takes. This results in a sensation of estrangement to the predominantly German-speaking audience. Yet, Arslan portrays the stereotypical milieu of Turkish-German youth of the late 1990s. He exaggeratedly

⁵² S-Bahn is a type of urban and suburban railway, which is one of the most important and most frequently used means of transportation in Berlin.

uses stereotypes that are widely held by mainstream German society about Turkish-Germans⁵³. The reasons for this may be the fact that he allows, through the use of known clichés, the German audience to get access to the Turkish migrant world. However, the exaggeration clearly puts such stereotypes in question and alienates the audience at the same time. In the following sections, I will provide evidence for this assumption by analysing the protagonists, who play different roles and demonstrate the directions second-generation migrants could take in Germany, in depth.

3.2.1 Erol and Ahmed – Searching for a Home in Two Dichotomic Worlds

Erol and Ahmed are two brothers who care for each other deeply. Despite their emotional attachment, they could not be more different; in fact, they represent opposite sides of a spectrum. Erol is an irascible, disoriented young man, while Ahmed is quiet and determined. At first glance, Ahmed could be seen as the most integrated sibling of the three. To elaborate, his integration with German culture is on the strongest foothold when compared to his siblings. With his rather bourgeois educational path, by pursuing his A-Levels (Abitur) and his German girlfriend Lisa, he does not differ from other young people in Germany. He is rather estranged from his Turkish background, which becomes most evident by his tendency to avoid speaking in Turkish with Erol and his friends. With these two brothers, Arslan contrasts two ways of dealing with both their Turkish as well as their German roots and plays with cultural stereotypes. While Erol chooses the tradition of his father's culture, Ahmed seems to be fully assimilated in the German culture of his mother. Arslan uses different aspects of the two brothers' portrayal to exaggerate essentialist clichés. With Erol and Ahmed, he suggests a form of cultural hybridity that emphasises one culture by expelling the other. In this sense, the hybridity does not reflect the emergence of something new but rather the mimicry of the preferred culture (see Bhabha, 1994). Both of them lay claims to a clear-cut identity, as Turkish and as German respectively. However, this does not seem to have happened voluntarily, as Erol is pushed to it by his lack of options as well as his criminal tendencies and Ahmed by his apparent lack of choice to lead another life apart from being an integrated German. Abel supports this train of thought as he suggests

⁵³ For example, the Turkish taxi driver, the Turkish criminal, the *Dönermann*, see, for example, Şebnem Köşer Akçapar's *Turkish Immigrants in Western Europe and North America: Immigration and Political Mobilization* (2012).

that ‘any (seeming) affirmation of identity [...] results simply from a lack of perspective’ (Abel, 2013, p.44).

Erol could be considered as the black sheep of the family, yet he is the pride of his father when he decides to join the Turkish military service, which Erol understands to be his duty as a Turkish citizen. His decision to do so is based on his lack of perspective and sense of not belonging in Berlin Kreuzberg. From a rather essentialist point of view, Erol must appear to be the most Turkish-looking sibling with his longer, dark curly hair, a moustache, and leather jacket, while his brother, with his baggy pants and hoodie, looks like a typical German teenager of the 1990s. Looks count towards the most obvious elements for cultural distinctions. Even though they have the potential to be a source of negative stereotyping, I suggest that this film uses them purposely in order to highlight the contrast between the two brothers and thus, at first glance, to enforce cultural stereotypes.

Besides the few scenes with hip-hop scores, only natural urban sounds such as means of public transit, birds twittering, cars, and conversations of passers-by function as acoustic accompaniments. Yet, the sensation of realism is disturbed, as these sounds are at times overwhelming, even annoying. Particularly, in the scenes at the brothers’ room with the window open, the sounds of the passing S-Bahn and cars are dominant. This is an indication that despite their decorations and their attempt to make the room a place of belonging, their room cannot be seen as their home. The outside noise disturbs the homeliness created by the rather stereotypical decorations and the apparent cosy atmosphere of the room. Erol’s side of the room has a very masculine flavour. Martial arts posters and boxing gloves suggest his affinity for self-defence sports and underline Erol’s attempt to overcome his insecurity by pursuing particularly masculine sports. Clearly, Arslan refers to what Barbara Mennel called ‘ghettocentrism’ (2002), a masculinity that is the basis for the stereotypical image of a Turkish man. In her article *Bruce in Kreuzberg and Scarface in Altona Ghetto* Mennel suggests that these two films draw on the mainly American genre of ghettocentric films⁵⁴ to describe a ‘marginalised masculinity’ (2002, p.135) that thrives by representing the stereotypical migrant criminal in an ‘urban ghetto’ (ibid). Arslan seems to enforce this negative stereotype as the audience only sees long shots

⁵⁴ Examples are *Boyz n the Hood* (1991) by John Singleton and *Menace II Society* (1993) by Allen Hughes.

on Erol's side of the room while Ahmed's side is rarely focused on. Similar to Akın's portrayal of Gabriel, Bobby and Costas in *Short Sharp Shock*, Arslan describes Erol and the places where he spends his time (the gym, the pool hall, shady streets, and the kebab shop) as 'male focused' (Mennel, 2002, p.146) with a '[...] focus on a centripetal movement' (ibid). Also his reference to kung fu films, reflected by the posters on Erol's side of the room and the kung fu film Erol is watching later in the film, as well as Erol's criminal tendencies underline his exaggerated masculinity and are similarly used in Akın's *Short Sharp Shock*, which was released several years later. Again, the use of common themes reflect the similarities among Turkish-German films of this period.

Erol searches for something to make his life meaningful. With his enforced masculinity (also portrayed by Erol's morning exercise with weights) and his search for personal boundaries, which often puts him in dangerous situations, Arslan provides one way of dealing with insecurities and the lack of a sense of belonging. Simultaneously, he refers to the stereotypical Turkish man, who defines himself through masculinity. Erol provokes and exacerbates conflict situations rather than solve them, which stands in contrast to his brother's behaviour, who frequently functions as a mediator, especially for Erol. His reaction to the person who accidentally bumps into him exemplifies this behaviour (1:10:04–1:11:14). The camera shoots over the shoulders of Erol and Ahmed and this way follows their path. Erol does not move out of the other man's way, and as soon as they bump into each other, he erratically snaps at him. By abruptly following Erol with the camera, Arslan heightens the aggressiveness and tension of the scene. As throughout the entire film, there is no artificial lighting or soundtrack in this scene. The sense of realism created by this is supported by the observing camera and the long shot, following Erol and Ahmed walking down the street, at the end. Ahmed is the calming factor in this scene as in several other scenes when Erol's aggressiveness takes over. He attempts to avoid violent conflicts, which can also be seen in the scene with the neo-Nazis while Erol searches for them. Arslan underlines Erol's erratic aggressiveness, which again can be related to the widespread stereotype of the criminal and dangerous Turk. Mennel's ghettocentrism (2002) as a stereotype for young Turkish-German men is, thereby, reconstructed. Yet, by overemphasising Arslan deconstructs and ridicules such as clichés.

Even though Erol owes money to almost every person he meets throughout the film, he brags with his new, expensive shoes and does not look for a job. He even vehemently rejects the idea of being a *Dönermann*⁵⁵, a stereotypical profession of Turkish migrants in Germany and the image that many Germans attach to them (potentially because this is the only meeting point with the Turkish culture). With this portrayal of exaggerated masculinity in combination with inner conflicts, Arslan breaks away from the widespread focus on female experiences, often marked by suffering of earlier Turkish-German films (for example, Başer's *40 Square Meters of Germany*, 1986), which is supported by Leal, Rosade, and Keynes put it in their study *Negotiating Gender, Sexuality and Ethnicity in Fatih Akin's and Thomas Arslan's Urban Spaces* (2008), as *Brothers and Sisters* (alongside Akin's *Short Sharp Shock* and Arslan's *Dealer*):

[...] foreground(s) identity issues for young men of ethnic minority origin in Germany in the 1990s, exposing problems inherent in defining a sense of masculine selfhood when male identity has become tied up with crime and violence (2008, p.6).

Erol has a strong affinity for status symbols. His shoes and his leather jacket are extraordinarily important to him, so much so that he prefers to buy flashy shoes over clearing his debts. These superficial elements, which even let him shortly forget about earlier conflicts (see the scene when he bumps into a man on the street), are part of his attempt to fill the void (created by the lack of self-confidence) using his masculinity. In essence, his pursuit to master Turkish masculinity or at least what he believes is masculinity is almost ridiculed not only by his brother Ahmed but also by Arslan's narrative. While earlier Turkish-German films often portrayed masculinity as something daunting and dangerous (for example, *Farewell to False Paradise*⁵⁶, 1989), *Brothers and Sisters* shows Erol how ludicrous his attempt is. Thus, Arslan again deconstructs an established stereotype of Turkish men and thereby reveals the myth about it. Erol attempts to base his sense of belonging on a group identity marked by petty crime on the streets of Kreuzberg, (superficial) loyalty to his friends, and

⁵⁵ Colloquially used for an attendant at a kebab shop.

⁵⁶ Başer's film describes Elif's husband as humiliating, abusive, physically and sexually, which leaves Elif no alternative but to kill him.

aggressiveness. On top of this, his friends take any opportunity to exclude him from the community of *real* Turks by mocking him about his German mother and his machoism.

Erol struggles with his perceived incomplete Turkishness. Besides, his friends and also his brother rag him by saying that he does not even speak proper Turkish. This certainly chips away at his self-confidence. He responds to such demeaning comments, once again, with machoism and anger and particularly demonstrates his machoism by being derogatory towards other foreigners. In fact, he attempts to mark his territory, to protect his place (which, in this case, is equivalent to Turkish space) and, in essence, his place of belonging by demarcating it from others. Throughout the film, it is clear that he remains unsuccessful. A seemingly harmless situation in front of the kebab shop is in danger of escalation when Erol starts complaining and mocking the two men he calls *gypsies*⁵⁷. Two men catch his eye at the kebab shop. The scene from 00:29:04–00:31:45 outside the shop is decisive. The three friends have a conversation about the origin of the two men in Turkish. As soon as they leave the shop as well, Erol switches to German and aggressively questions them, which leads them to leave. They continue their conversation about the two men in German. This code-switching has a twofold function. On a superficial level, he assumes German to be the lingua franca and thereby makes sure that the two people understand his words. By letting Erol enunciate his racist comments in German, Arslan also reveals the absurdity of such comments considering his own aspirations to enforce his membership of the Turkish community. He uses discriminatory and racist comments that are not expected from a member of a minority, which is often exposed to such prejudice. The fact that he established ‘us Turkish’ as the morally superior of the two cultures may be influenced by his insecurity. However, using stereotypes and prejudices the same way as potentially xenophobic Germans would use them against Turkish people is rather peculiar. His comment about the two strangers he called gypsies (‘They use the social system and work as pimps.’), in fact, requires a certain identification with Germany, which again seems to be denied by Erol with his decision to receive the Turkish passport. Arslan, through Erol, enforces the dichotomy of foreigners and natives, which is transferred by Erol to Turkish versus *gypsies* in order to upgrade his own self-perception. In other words, by demarcating himself as a Turk

⁵⁷ Erol uses the German word ‘Zigeuner’, which is a derogatory term frequently used for Romani people. In this case, it is purposely used by Erol to establish his Turkish ‘we-group’ as superior.

from other migrants (supposedly gypsies), aligning himself with a ‘we-group’⁵⁸ (Kreckel, 1994, p.15), and elevating the position of Turkish migrants with respect to other migrants, he enforces his identity and attempts to strengthen his point of reference. This behaviour, in fact, reflects a particular form of cultural racism⁵⁹, which uses the ‘cultural heritage as a source of strength and self-assurance’ (Räthzel, 2002, p.7). Interestingly enough, even though Erol was just defending his Turkishness in front of his friends, he now derives his assumed superiority from his German side, proposing a culturally hybrid form of racism. Thus, his cultural hybridity somewhat tricks him here, since and even though he is looking for a home in Turkey; as a Turkish citizen, he defends German cultural norms for the purpose of excluding the other. Arslan hereby underlines the dubiousness of clear-cut essentialist cultural categorisations once more.

Already, Erol’s first scene in the film allows for making conclusions about his character. When Ahmed gets ready, Erol is still in bed and complains about Ahmed making some noise, even though the sounds of the passing S-Bahn outside seem to fill the entire background noise. Certainly, here, he attempts to demonstrate his superiority as an older brother. Right after this outburst, however, he turns around and continues to sleep. Later that morning (00:05:55-00:06:52) when we see him in his room, he plays with his lighter. He repeatedly holds the lighter under his fingers just close enough so that they do not get burned. This *play with the fire* has several symbolic meanings. First, he is terribly bored and attempts to fill his life with some excitement. From his first scenes on, Arslan underlines Erol’s apparent lack of perspective. He, thereby, utilises the theme of the male Turkish *loser*, which is recurring in Turkish-German films (for example, Cem und Mehmet in Yavuz’s *April Children*, 1998, and Cahit in Akın’s *Head-on*, 2004).

In fact, Erol sees himself as a loser and appears to have given up on a successful life in Germany, which is underlined by his words to Ahmad: ‘What am I supposed to do here?’⁶⁰ (00:12:08). He was expelled from school, has no job and has dodgy friends, owes almost every person he meets on the street money, and is involved in petty crimes. His criminal behaviour as well as the machoism he proves in front of his

⁵⁸ ‘Wir-Gruppe’ (Kreckl, 1994, p.15).

⁵⁹ The term ‘cultural racism’ was first coined by Martin Barker (1981) to describe a new racism in Britain, which is based on racism due to physical differences yet augmented to cultural differences from a civilized norm (see also Modood, 2015, pp.154-172).

⁶⁰ ‘Was soll ich denn hier?’

friends reflect the fact that he attempts to overcome his own inadequacies by trying to find his place in the world. Despite his macho behaviour, he seems to be constantly on the run from someone or something. He knows his way around the streets of Berlin Kreuzberg and is familiar with little hiding places. Nevertheless, Gallagher suggests that 'the street space seems primarily to be an expression of Erol's exclusion from the space represented by mainstream German society' (2006, p.340). The streets, even though they mark *his* territory, cannot provide him with the feeling of belonging. On the streets, he attempts to avoid certain people and situations as well as protect himself from problems. They make him rushed and nervous, as if being constantly on the run. Ahmed, on the other hand, seems to belong on the streets. While he appears to always be on track when he walks through the streets of Berlin Kreuzberg, his brother is aimless and lost. With Ahmed's almost exaggerated casual and determined style of walking and the natural way he greets the people he meets, this sensation is enhanced. Yet, he is also confronted with his two worlds on the streets, or rather, he cannot avoid the encounter with his Turkish side while meeting Erol's friends, taking the S-Bahn, or just listening to the street sounds. Even though his demeanour exudes self-confidence, his created inner struggle is visible and expressed by his steady melancholy and thoughtfulness. Thus, even though Arslan *allows* both of them to leave the walls of their parent's apartment and thereby somewhat liberates them, which confers with the shift in Turkish-German cinema of the time of production, the siblings' journey through the streets of Kreuzberg does not fulfil their longing for belonging. With the character traits and the resulting behaviour of the two brothers, Arslan reverses expected behaviours. While Ahmed, the successful and supposedly well-integrated brother, is portrayed as a quiet and introverted young man, Erol, the brother who has failed in most areas of his life, is displayed as cocky, loud, and extroverted. Again, Arslan breaks the cause–expectation–effect circle, which should keep the audience alert by categorising tendencies.

Apart from the streets of Kreuzberg, at first glance, the gym and pool hall represent hiding places or places of belonging to Erol. Here, he can be with his friends. In addition, here, Erol is safe from his debtors (a point that should not be neglected). But even from there, which could be called a safe haven, they are pushed out by the police from the pool hall and from the gym by his own machoism and insecurity. Thus, he is forced back on the streets, which represents rootlessness and even danger. The scene at the pool hall underlines the feeling of hopelessness and intractability of this

situation (00:49:34–00:51:56). Without any warning and disrespectfully, the two plainclothes policemen search Erol, Ahmed, and their friends and request to see their identification. Arslan shoots this scene again with an observing camera, which puts the audience directly in the middle of the events shown. When one of Erol's friends speaks in Turkish, one police officer gets even more aggressive. They seem to be under general suspicion, as the police search them with no apparent reason. This invokes an instant feeling of unfairness and supports an identification with the boys. Here, Arslan clearly points a finger at the way Turkish-Germans or migrants have been treated at the time of the film's production (which, in essence, has not changed much since).

The general suspicion Erol, Ahmed, and their friends are subject to due to their Turkish backgrounds is still widespread. The interesting fact is that Erol indeed is a criminal and thereby supports this image of Turkish-Germans. Even though the induced feeling of unfair treatment by the police officers dominates this scene, Arslan again does not intend to create favouritism for any character's behaviour or choice of identification. In accordance with his style, Arslan resolves this potentially dramatic scene with an anti-climactic, unspectacular end with the friends standing outside and discussing whether one of them should become a police officer. The deconstruction of apparent places of belonging per se support negative stereotypes of Turkish-Germans – the pool hall as place of lethargy, enforcing the image of the lazy, feckless migrant and the gym as an epicentre of machoism, pinpointing the higher degree of masculinity in Turkish culture. This manner of deconstruction reveals once again the absurdity of stereotyping and essentialist ideas of culture.

As opposed to his siblings, Erol pursues no formal education, no vocational training and aimlessly wanders through the streets of Berlin Kreuzberg. He seems lost, yet he is searching for his place of belonging, his home, and attempts to compensate this longing by becoming a Turkish citizen (which happened before the film began) and by reporting for military duty in Turkey⁶¹, which essentially will require him to move to Turkey. At the same time, military service also provides the opportunity for him to escape from his debtors. The scene when he opens the draft letter with his mother is a prime example of Arslan's style and the resulting intensity. The entire scene lasts 2:08 minutes (00:07:18 – 00:09:26) and consists of a static close-up shot of Erol's side profile. The shot is held also when his mother enters the camera frame. Erol

⁶¹ Military service is, as per Article 2 of the Turkish National Service Act, the duty of all Turkish men until the age of 20 (see Çinar, 2014).

and his mother are sitting on the couches in the living room of their flat, with a flower wallpaper in the background. The mother sits facing the camera straight, allowing the audience to study her emotions better than Erol's. The tension felt by the mother is almost tangible, which enhances the sensation that she is already aware of the seriousness of the letter's content. She lights up a cigarette, underlining her discomfort with the situation. By reminding Erol of their past in Istanbul and the episode when she saved him from falling off the balcony, she starts to show her worries. By reminiscing of their time in Turkey, she attempts to deconstruct Erol's *postmemory* (Hirsch, 1997), which she assumes to be his reason for being drawn towards Turkey. As his reaction to her worried question of whether he is sure about doing his military service in Turkey, he insists that it is his duty as a Turkish citizen as an irrevocable fact. Her continuing worried questions and Erol's answers to them reveal his naivety about his decision, which leads him, when he is caught, right away to react in an aggressive manner. At the end of this scene, the mother resigns herself to her son's obstinacy and announces almost recalcitrantly that his father will be happy about his choice of doing military service. Clearly, Arslan sheds light on the cultural conflict between the mother and the father here, suggesting that his father, due to his cultural background and pride for his son, neglects her worries. In her voice, resentment about the Turkish traditions of her husband's culture can also be heard. Here, Arslan only slightly touches upon the conflict between the first-generation culturally mixed couple, as he clearly focuses on the conflicts of their children. This scene emphasises the mother's role as the voice of reason and criticises unreflected cultural traditions in general by revealing their naivety, but Arslan also enlarges the rift between Erol's cultural heritages with this scene.

Through his static shot, Arslan creates the feeling of intimacy, which is also reached by the lack of background sounds and underlined by the observing camera. The audience can concentrate unobstructed on the little nuances in the mother's face, which show her growing discomfort with her son's decision and on Erol's desultory explanations. Early in the film, Erol's despair and desire to belong to something or somewhere is shown with this scene. Interestingly enough, the German mother calls upon Erol's sense of family. In other words, she supports collectivism, generally connected with Turkish culture, while Erol insists on his individuality, which is often seen as a characteristic of German culture (see Hofstede, 1983). Despite a seemingly clear-cut situation regarding the differences between Turkish and German culture, by

interchanging values presumably connected with these cultures, he questions such essentialist cultural categorisation.

Erol very much ties his identity to extrinsic, almost superficial factors such as the Turkish language and Turkish passport. With this demeanour, Arslan introduces an essentialist understanding of identity and belonging and the idea of primordial attachments (Geertz, 1994). Erol searches for his home in Turkey. The longing for this home does not derive from his memory (from a *lieu de mémoire*) as he was very young when the family returned to Germany. Erol's Turkey and, therefore, his idea of home is based on the view of his father as well as a collective memory deriving from the Turkish-German community. It relies on fantasies and escape routes that create an imagined home, not a place that Erol has actually consciously experienced, relating his home to Anderson's *imagined communities* (2006). In other words, Erol perceives himself to belong to a home that is, in this case, constructed by his ideas of Turkey. Yet, he certainly believes that Turkey as a location will be his salvation and the end of his search for belonging.

In several conversations with Ahmed, Erol expresses his feeling of being lost and his desire for a place of belonging. He converts his anxiety and belongingness into the desire to fulfil his duty as a Turkish male citizen by enlisting to the Turkish army as well as by attempting to be more Turkish. In fact, he even tends to overcompensate his dissatisfaction and lack of a point of reference by being more prone to violence. Yet, here again, he fulfils a prejudice against Turkish men in Germany. Whenever he speaks and defends his decision about returning to Turkey, he quickly becomes agitated. This is particularly clear in the scene when Erol shows the draft letter to his brother Ahmed (00:11:54–00:13:35). His brother cannot understand his decision, and his incredulity increasingly frustrates Erol. Yet, he seems to lack a proper explanation for his plan apart from the 'What I am I supposed to do here?'⁶² or 'Who gives a fuck about me?'⁶³ In essence, Erol attempts to escape from his life without any prospects in Kreuzberg and without 'a positive sense of his identity as a Turk' (Abel, 2013, p.49). Arslan's filming style of unobtrusive shooting for almost two minutes gives the audience the feeling of almost being part of the conversation. The shot and reverse shot sequence with extreme close-ups on their faces allows the audience to detect any emotional movement in the brothers' faces. Ahmed is genuinely worried about his

⁶² 'Was soll ich denn hier?'

⁶³ 'Wer gibt denn einen Fick auf mich?'

brother's decision and attempts to convince him to stay by mocking him about his lack of Turkish language skills. Erol is frustrated with his brother as he does not seem to understand his motives for going to Turkey. At one point, he even blames Ahmed for feeling something better. Yet, this is merely a product of Erol's insecurity and jealousy as he presumes that Ahmed indeed has found stability and his place of belonging. It is difficult to see beyond his overemphasised coolness. However, at no point in the movie does Ahmed seem happy, neither with his girlfriend, nor at home or with Erol's friends. He openly rejects his Turkish ancestry, which is in contrast with Erol's wish to be as Turkish as possible. Throughout the film, Arslan increasingly lets Ahmad's façade of stability crumble.

Generally, the audience sees Erol's brother Ahmed reading in his bed filmed with a close-up shot on him. Due to the scattered decorations, the posters, and the children's bedside lamp, their room looks like a hotchpotch of their childhood memories, which reflects its inhabitants' attempt to create a place of belonging throughout that period. Leferink's signs of identity ultimately come into mind (2006, p.43), which this room could be filled with. Yet, the apparent oblivion that is tied to many of the objects in the room and their inconsistency deny this room the status of a *lieu de memoire* (Nora, 1996), which could suggest that it is indeed (part of) a home in the past (see Chapter 1).

Ahmed's identity markers and understanding of home, on the other hand, are more hidden. He has chosen to avoid Turkish culture in his life (his aversion for using the Turkish language especially stands out here). Nonetheless, his apparent lack of emotions and the distance he is treating his surroundings with makes it clear that he cannot be positioned on the exact opposite of a spectrum from Erol. This observation also shines through while looking at Ahmed's relationship with his girlfriend, who, in fact, does not interest him much and rather annoys him instead of providing him with a reference point in his search for belonging. As opposed to his brother, who can no longer bear the deficiencies in his life and passionately tries to find his spot in the world, Ahmed seems to be somewhat undemanding and to locate his place of belonging within German society without questioning it. By contrasting the two brothers, Arslan, at first glance, seems to suggest that in order to find a place of belonging, a home, it is essential to choose one cultural side. However, throughout the film, the inapplicability of such a clear-cut solution in the lives of young Turkish-Germans is revealed.

From a populist point of view, Ahmed could be understood, in contrast to his brother, as an example of successful integration. As mentioned before, I propose however to use the term integration with great care as this in itself supports an essentialist view on culture, suggesting that cultural differences of the migrant group need to be adapted in order to make it a part of the predominant hosting culture. In my opinion, the goal, especially with regard to a culturally hybrid community, should be inclusion, which acknowledges difference not as a separating force but as an enriching one. Yet, Ahmed's difficulties with the Turkish culture and his resulting behaviour suggest a tendency for assimilation rather than inclusion. Andrea Reimann even suggests that Arslan's film favours Ahmed's behaviour and implies the opinion that assimilation is the best option for Turkish-Germans (2006, p.157). I have to disagree with her, as Arslan refrains from evaluating the different paths in any way and does not attempt to direct the sympathies of the audience towards any of the characters. He rather concentrates on the complexities of each character and their self-perception.

Ahmed's detachment from his Turkish side becomes evident for the first time, in the very beginning of the film, where Arslan sets out in Ahmed's direction with a very short but decisive scene (00:04:21–00:04:30). He takes the S-Bahn and looks out of the window, where Turkish conversations can be heard in the background. After a while, he looks in an almost disapproving manner at a group of Turkish-speaking men. Arslan uses a close-up shot to focus on Ahmed, which allows the audience to closely observe his reactions to the Turkish conversation, while the group is outside the audience's range of vision. This scene must feel foreign and demarcating to the audience. Barring a few Kiez-German words (and unless the audience understands Turkish), it is not clear what the group speaks about. The next scene shows him walking towards a kiosk after leaving alighting from the S-Bahn. Nothing in these scenes gives the hint that Ahmed speaks Turkish. In retrospect, he seems to avoid speaking Turkish, as clearly he is surrounded by predominantly Turkish people at the S-Bahn and the kiosk. He appears to be the stranger in these scenes, although the Turkish conversations in the background and the Turkish sounds create a different environment to a German-speaking audience. The lack of subtitles creates the feeling of exclusion, while at this moment, the audience cannot yet tell whether this is also the case for Ahmed. Ahmed's reaction is rather uninterested, yet a certain annoyance can be noticed in his face. As he gets off the train, he stops at the newsstand that his filled with Turkish newspapers; no German titles are visible. These scenes highlight

Ahmed's persistence to follow his German side, yet, the dominance of the Turkish language enforces Ahmed's conflict between these two worlds and suggests a lack of belonging to either. His cultural hybridity takes on shades different from those of Erol. He attempts to assimilate the German culture also because he suggests that he cannot speak Turkish very well (according to his own assessment). However, he is certainly torn between his loyalty for his brother and the rejection of his Turkish descent. In essence, he struggles with his two cultures, not allowing him to embrace the pleasure of cultural hybridity. Thus, Ahmed also reflects an essentialist idea of culture, which focuses on differences rather than potential. Throughout the film, it becomes clear that he is the sibling who has the least understanding of where his home, his place of belonging could be. This is underlined by his frequent absent-mindedness and lack of emotion.

Ahmed's potential safe place is his side of the room and his books. Several times throughout the film, Arslan takes the time to focus on these moments of silence and thoughtfulness. Ahmed is the first character to be seen in the film sitting in his room through the window, and the sounds of the street enter the room in the background. His thoughtful, yet empty glance sets the mood for the entire film. Arslan films him in the exact same position towards the end of the film again. This created frame underlines the fact that his situation has not changed throughout the film. At first glance, the opportunity to base his identity beyond the limited space of Berlin Kreuzberg is derived largely from his education, supporting the idea of the privileged intellectual (Spivak, 1993; Friedmann, 1997). Yet, he lacks the passion with which Erol and Leyla search for their place of belonging, their home.

The contrasting portrayal of the two brothers functions as a comparison of different cultural attitudes, materialism and education-referentiality, collectivism and individualism. Due to the lack of valorisation of any of these aspects, this contrast also points out various options of and different influences of specific life choices and situations and the permeability of cultural categorisations.

3.2.2 Modernity versus Traditionalism

The third sibling, Leyla, is a strong, emancipated young woman, who stands in contrast to the portrayal of Turkish women as victims in earlier films about Turkish migrants (for example, *Shirin's Wedding*, 1976; *40 Square Meters of Germany*, 1986;

and *Yasemin*, 1988). She likes to spend time with her friends, especially her best friend Sevim; she frequently escapes from her family and stays at Sevim's place overnight. She goes out dancing and speaks with her friends about men, love, and the future. Arslan intentionally created a strong female character, as he was annoyed that 'especially the girls were rarely admitted to develop their own life' and that generally these girls 'were affixed schemata, tormented victims, who were forced to wear the headscarf'⁶⁴ (Arslan quoted in Nicodemus, 1997).

Nevertheless, Arslan does not entirely free her from stereotypes and liberate her from limitations based on her culture and gender. Her job as a seamstress and her inability to leave Berlin Kreuzberg and thus the walls of confinement, which seem to go along with her migrant background, reflect and even enforce an image of migrant women who are not their own master. Rather than emphasising the vulnerability of women, Arslan focuses on Erol's story. Thus, Leyla receives less attention than her two brothers. Nevertheless, she is portrayed as a self-confident woman, who attempts to break free from her family to start her own life. While this could be an indication that Arslan breaks with the cinema of duty, still, her job, as Barbara Mennel points out, links her to her predecessors in earlier Turkish-German films: 'the emphasis on the realistic portrayal of her at the workplace is reminiscent of the earlier socially critical phase of Turkish-German filmmaking' (2002, p.146). Yet, the character of Leyla differs explicitly from other portrayals of Turkish-German girls or women of this time. She self-confidently, almost cockily treats men (specifically Cem), goes clubbing, and speaks about moving in with her best friend. Arslan equips Leyla with a lot of freedoms. Her dress code suggests no tendency towards Turkish traditions. The fact that Leyla is not wearing a headscarf underlines the absence of religion as a denominator in the film, a common feature of the Turkish-German films of the 1990s (see Chapter 2).

She seems embarrassed because of her father's mistakes while using the German language. The relationship with her father is difficult. The scene when she speaks to her father about her plan to go to Hamburg stands out. At first, it appears to be an amicable father-daughter talk. As opposed to how father-daughter relationships in the Turkish community are often portrayed in the media and in earlier Turkish-German films, they are equally respectful to each other and not characterised by an

⁶⁴ 'Das waren in der Regel aufgeklebte Schemata, gepeinigte Opfer, denen das Kopftuch übergestülpt wird.' (Arslan quoted in Nicodemus, 1997)

unequal power distribution, at first. But she reaches the boundaries of this emancipation and self-determination when she asks her father for permission to go to Hamburg with Cem. With her request, she reaches the point of no return, where her father's traditions most clearly collide with Leyla's modernism. At this point, her father's traditionalism takes over and he ends up hitting her, which makes her mother very angry. Here, the two worlds collide violently. By asking her father for permission, she acknowledges his authority as father; however, when he denies it, the situation escalates. With the mother's support, she rebels against her father. Leyla and her father are, apart from the two brothers, a second contrasting pair in *Brothers and Sisters*, the traditional father versus the modern, self-confident Leyla. As opposed to the three siblings, the father is generally shown at his flat. As a first-generation Turkish-German, he represents the stereotypical Turkish migrant worker. He came to Germany filled with dreams. However, as opposed to the migrant workers who were recruited to advance the economic miracle, he came to the country to pursue his university studies. Now, his dreams have crumbled and the family barely financially survives with his income as a taxi driver and that of his wife. Arslan chose a stereotypical profession for the father, the taxi driver, to exaggerate a cliché. In addition to his traditionalism and his frequent withdrawal from the outside world and escape to his Turkish dream world, his job gives him the label of a failed migrant, which was and is a widespread opinion held by a substantial part of German society about their migrants. These characteristics and the fact that he still, as opposed to his children, has difficulties with the German language suggest that his character is a reference to John Berger's *A Seventh Man* (2010)⁶⁵.

The more he attempts to strengthen his authority, the angrier Leyla gets, up to the point where her behaviour takes on childish patterns. The fact that she openly rejects her father's authority in such a way with the help of her mother distinguishes the representation of women in *Brothers and Sisters* from earlier Turkish-German films, where the authority of the father is rarely questioned and the mother generally keeps quiet in front of her husband (see for example, *Head-on* by Fatih Akin, 2004). Leyla suffers most from the limitations and tensions at their flat, which she frequently announces; therefore, she tries to escape from it as often as possible. The fact that she has such moments of freedom transcends the image of the speechless, trapped woman,

⁶⁵ *A Seventh Man* is a thoughtful book about migrant workers, first published in 1975, which remains contemporary as it highlights the struggle of migrants to find their place in their host cultures.

yet these freedoms are limited and dependent on the binary negotiations between the authoritative Turkish father and the emancipated German mother. Thus, they are still caught in binary difference.

Even though the father attempts to keep control, his position is not as safe as it may seem. On many occasions, he is forced into a corner, not only by Leyla. In conflict situations, he retires to the living room and his Turkish TV show, to his *lieu de mémoire* (Nora, 1996), his little imagined piece of Turkey. It seems as if he only finds peace there, which is emphasised by the dinner scene. This makes him look rather weak and vulnerable, which stands in contrast to his attempt to appear authoritative when he defends Turkish politics too, although it causes problems between him and his wife. His longing for belonging is based on a collective memory, which is enforced by him due to him living in a self-chosen diaspora. His dreams and wishes have not come true in Germany; he lacks options for a better life in Germany, and therefore, his home is a utopia, fuelled by the desire for his old country. His wife seems to be the controlling member in the family. He ascribed himself the role of the traditional father, but he cannot fulfil this role. The overwhelming disappointment and inability to control his children and wife increase his longing for his old home, which he can only experience in his little hiding space while epitomising the temporal and, in this case at the same time, utopian aspect of home. Although he frequently threatens the family to leave for Turkey, it is easy to understand that these are only idle threats. With these two antipodes of the Turkish father and the German mother, Arslan enforces stereotypical understandings of Turkish culture as traditional and male-dominated and German culture as modern and emancipated. At the same time, he turns these cultural categorisations around and highlights their permeability.

Leyla is portrayed as a person with healthy self-confidence, not just towards her father. She behaves very confidently with men in general. Her behaviour in the scene when she meets Cem at the club particularly expresses Leyla's emancipation (00:42:18–00:43:47). Arslan uses no lights in addition to the club lights, which makes this scene rather dark. Here, Arslan proves once more that his female protagonist is different from female characters of earlier Turkish-German films. Arslan's camera is static and observing, which again creates the feeling of being in the middle of the scene. He captures Leyla and Cem with a medium shot. Only the soft club music can be heard in the background. Leyla is unapproachable to Cem, almost arrogant. As she said before during the conversation with her two friends about men, she keeps him on

the hook and at no point compromises her autonomy. Her answers to Cem's questions are brief, almost unfriendly up to the point that she accuses him of interrogating her. After some moments of playing hard-to get, she agrees to going to the movies with him, yet insists on paying for her own ticket. This demonstrates her self-confidence towards men and her strength as a woman. As opposed to her successors in Turkish-German films, she holds her head high and refuses to be dependent on a man.

Among the siblings, she seems to be the most competent in dealing with her cultural hybridity. She is less confused about her cultural hybridity than her brothers. Leyla and Sevim use the best of both worlds. When they have their girly talk that they do not want anyone to hear, they switch to Turkish. This could indicate a successful cultural hybridity. Yet, her age and her father's traditionalism leave her caught in the world of Berlin Kreuzberg. Despite her freedoms, Leyla struggles with the traditions of her father's culture and the restrictions for women that seem to go along with it. With the contrasting father-daughter pair, and also the two brothers, Arslan highlights the opportunities of the second-generation migrants as opposed to the first generation. Even though the family is connected by love and care for each other, they seem to be worlds apart.

The ending scenes depict the reversal of the assigned locus of the genders of earlier Turkish-German films and, thereby, epitomise a break with earlier Turkish-German cinema. While Ahmed is shown in his room, Leyla is placed outdoors. The last scene of the film shows her walking contently through the streets. We do not know where she is going; yet, the ending is open and contains the potential that she, in fact, finds her culturally hybrid way to a sense of belonging and to her home. By the end of the film, her search for a place of belonging is, however, not concluded as she is still caught between the two different worlds that hold on to her and thereby do not allow her to construct her own identity.

3.3 Home in *Brothers and Sisters*

The question of home is never raised explicitly throughout the film. However, each sibling is clearly searching for a point of reference, a place of belonging, and therefore, a home. Erol searches for it in Turkey, where he hopes he can be *someone* and be safe from all the problems he is facing in Germany. Ahmed, at first glance, tries

to find his home through education; he is potentially the most integrated sibling in Germany. The more the audience gets to know him, the clearer it becomes that he, in fact, does not have a clear idea of his place of belonging and struggles between the two worlds. Leyla, on the other hand, copes with her life between cultures better than her brothers, enjoying the best of both worlds. She comes closest to Göktürk's 'modern metropolitan figure' (2000b, p.65) and yet is still inhibited by outside factors such as her age and her father's traditions. Her home still lies in her future. Even the father is searching for his home, but his home is a utopia fuelled by memories from the past. Thus, a home seems to be not found in this film. The closest all three siblings get to home is in their search for it. All three use different directions, but essentially, the film's ending does not conclude their search; it leaves the audience with the question of whether they will finally arrive at their haven of belonging. None of the siblings have a *lieu de memoire* nor a collective memory that they could hold on to and use as a reference point for their feeling of home.

The three protagonists are typical siblings with all their quarrels and power struggles, yet their relationship is marked by a particular warmth. They greet each other with kisses and hugs, are worried about each other, and take care of each other. Despite their different individual conflicts due to their search of a place of belonging, the three siblings are very much emotionally connected with each other. Nevertheless, due to their different ways of dealing with their cultural hybridity, they cannot be very supportive to each other in their search. It is clear that none of them can find the same home as the others or even find a home within their family bonds.

The walk through the streets of Berlin Kreuzberg reflects Arslan's affinity for the process of transition and symbolises different ways of dealing with cultural hybridity and the resulting problematic search for a home. Ahmed moves self-confidently and is determined, yet detached from his surroundings. His education may pave a path for his future; however, his potential place of belonging cannot be determined. Erol's walk is insecure and nervous. He searches for a home by escaping from everything that is familiar to him. Besides the emphasis on masculinity and status symbols, his tendency towards aggression and to denigrate other social groups clearly show compensational behaviour. Erol's lack of perspectives pushes him to search for an anchor, a place of belonging, and thus he devotes himself fully to the home of his father, Turkey. Leyla walks naturally and comfortably, yet is confined to the streets of

Kreuzberg. She deals most successfully with her cultural hybridity but remains stuck in the polarity of traditionalism and modernism.

Compared to the other Berlin trilogy films, *Brothers and Sisters* takes on an introductory role. This film explores different options for young Turkish-Germans and displays potential conflicts based on cultural hybridity. Arslan draws a realistic image that highlights the complexity of different situations and thereby refutes homogenising tendencies. He displays different ways of identification with Erol, Ahmed, and Leyla, which at first sight could be framed within the polarity of assimilation and ghettocentrism. However, this would not do justice to the complexity and individual stories of this film. Neubauer suggests that the characters of this film are more than mere symbols or representatives for the debate of assimilation versus ghettoisation (Neubauer, 2011, p.283). However, he continues to propose that the film does not intend to portray a problem but rather the realities of young Turkish-Germans. I cannot completely agree with this proposition, as I believe that with his exaggerated contrast (Erol versus Ahmed, Leyla versus their father) as well as his almost intrusive use of stereotypes, Arslan does in fact intentionally point the audience at difficulties of cultural hybridity. Nevertheless, the film does not favour either way of identification or lifestyle, nor does it propose the ideal solution for dealing with cultural hybridity. Despite the use of several cultural dichotomies, contrasts, and clichés, such as individualism versus collectivism, femininity versus masculinity, traditionalism versus modernism, Arslan focuses on the consequences of such approaches and particular life situations. The film observes the characters and their everyday activities and avoids the instrumentalisation of his characters for the integration or migrant discourse by abstaining from the use of value judgements. By over-emphasising stereotypes and contrasting them, Arslan suggests that there is no such thing as a particular German and a particular *other*, a precise *here* and *there*. He lets his protagonists search for home without any real reference point and underlines the difficulty of finding a home within cultural hybridity. The three siblings are differently successful in searching for their place of belonging, yet none of them seems to reach it. Erol self-deceptively believes that a relocation to Turkey will solve his problems and allow him to belong somewhere; Ahmed almost indifferently lives his life as a presumably normal German teenager; Leyla feels that freedom from her family and the start of her own life will give her the home she is searching for.

The aspects of home, as outlined in Chapter 1, are difficult to discern, but they certainly include in this film the family, the flat, and the streets as a place, memories of the past, and dreams of the future, which in fact function reversely and create starting points for the character's search. Bhabha's successful cultural hybrid, who takes the best of both worlds, cannot be found in *Brothers and Sisters*, although the tendency towards it may be mostly reflected by Leyla.

The exaggerated (negative) stereotyping does not suggest that Arslan tries to enforce these clichés and feed the audience with reproductions of what people already believe to know. It is rather addressed to the informed audience that understands the hyperbole and resulting irony and thereby supports the process of subversion of cultural categorisation. Arslan breaks open strict, essentialist cultural categorisations by the use of exaggerated polarities of the *self* and the *other* and the intentional lack of valorisation of differences. By transferring the portrayal of Turkish-Germans to a meta-level, *Brothers and Sisters* marks a change to their portrayal in earlier Turkish-German films. However, his characters do not end up in Bhabha's third space, where difference no longer creates binaries. By intentionally contrasting cultural aspects, his characters still move along polarities of the self and other. Nevertheless, by making this cultural categorisation visible, he paves the way for more options that may be found in cultural hybridity. In essence, Arslan's way of overcoming essentialist cultural categorisation is through overemphasis, contrast, and reconstruction of stereotypes, which could provide new options for creating a home in a culturally hybrid situation. Both cultures are represented, but Arslan does not necessarily portray the result as culturally hybrid, as something new or as a third space but rather as coexistence. He asserts this understanding by contrasting these seemingly binary structures with his characters. Despite the use of superficial stereotypes and clichés, each sibling is a product of both cultures, although with different results. Thus, the question of home is perhaps inseparably connected to the success of dealing with their lives between two cultures. In essence, each sibling stands for a different way of handling this conflict and searching for a place where they can belong and experience a home. The various options they represent are results of the same starting situation, an upbringing in an environment influenced by two cultures.

4. DEALER – QUESTIONS OF BELONGING

4.1 Preliminary Remarks

The second film of Arslan's Berlin trilogy, *Dealer* (1999), is the most acclaimed film of his oeuvre, by the audience as well as critics. The film has earned both the FIPRESCI Award and the Award of the Ecumenical Jury at the Berlin Film Festival in 1999. Thomas Arslan is the director as well as the screenwriter of the film (Abel, 2013, p.152). The film depicts a couple of days in the life of Can, an insignificant drug dealer in Berlin Kreuzberg who attempts to flee from this world of petty crime but procrastinates his exit. As a result, his girlfriend leaves him with their daughter. His excursion to a legal job as a kitchen porter fails. Even though he is offered a way out by the police through the betrayal of his boss, he does not take it. He dreams of a better life as a bar owner, which he is promised by his criminal boss Hakan, but this offer turns out to be false and obsolete after Hakan's death. Ultimately, Can cannot resist returning to his criminal life and ends up in prison, alone.

While *Brothers and Sisters* demonstrates the inner conflict of the siblings created by living in between two cultures, Can's Turkish background at first sight does not play a significant role in *Dealer*. However, he struggles between two worlds, and they in fact signify two different cultures. On one hand, he is a father who cares for his daughter and his girlfriend a great deal; on the other hand, he is a criminal who cannot come to terms with honest work. These contrasting worlds between the stereotypical German family life and the stereotypical Turkish criminal make him suffer, as they each preclude the other. Throughout the film, he is constantly torn between these two places of belonging. It is clear that he wants to be with his family. Yet, his criminal activities move him further and further away from them and cause him to lose this place of belonging.

Even though Moritz Dehn suggests that *Dealer* is not a sequel to *Brothers and Sisters* (1999), the character of Can can be seen as a development of Erol in *Brothers and Sisters*. If Erol had stayed in Germany and had not moved to Turkey, he could have experienced a similar fate as Can. This impression is enforced by Arslan through the casting of the same actor for the role of Can, Tamer Yigit. Even though *Dealer* is not a direct continuation of the narrative in *Brothers and Sisters*, the director noted that the story entails a 'continuation of the work in a related thematic field' (Arslan quoted

in Seeßlen, 2000, p.4)⁶⁶. Like Erol, Can has a Turkish passport and moves mostly within a Turkish community. He is a thoughtful, introverted person and smarter than his co-workers, which is underlined by the almost ridiculing scene when he explains to one of them that one walkie-talkie is useless, ergo unprofitable without another one (00:22:26-00:22:58). He appears self-confident, at times cocky, unapproachable, and cruel. However, the fact that Can is not able to look people in the eye reveals his inner identity struggle and the accompanying lack of self-confidence, which is countered by Arslan's static camera and long shots. Arslan, thereby, achieves an almost uncomfortable nearness to Erol through the close and ruthless disclosure of Can's inefficiencies.

The film also takes up the issue of space and the search for belonging of young Turkish-Germans as thematised both in *Brothers and Sisters* and *A Fine Day*. As opposed to these two films, in which the mobility of the characters plays a significant role for the protagonists' construction of identity and their search for belonging, Can is restricted to an even more limited number of locations in Berlin Kreuzberg, often disconnected and colourless. The transitions between the different locations, which represent the two different worlds between which Can is moving, such as the grey, shabby industrial site and the dodgy clubs on one hand and the family apartment on the other hand, are often abrupt. The audience rarely sees the threshold between them, which creates a feeling of inevitability. These missing linking scenes represent an absence of a bridge between these two worlds, which essentially prevents the development of a third space (Bhabha, 1994).

Compared to earlier Turkish-German films, *Dealer*, at first sight, does not focus on the topics of migration and cultural hybridity. In fact, in his filmmaking style, Arslan deemphasises these motifs and thereby puts them on the same level as other issues. While several researchers celebrate the high level of integration portrayed in films by second-generation Turkish-German filmmakers promoting the idea of multiculturalism (see Burns, 2007; Göktürk, 2000b; Mennel, 2002), I suggest that Arslan narrates the story of a struggle between different worlds, where strict binary categorisations and the supposed better way of one side of the spectrum are not the solution. The 'pleasures of hybridity', as Göktürk (2000a) refers to the new way of

⁶⁶ 'ein Weiterarbeiten an einem verwandten thematischen Feld' (Arslan in Seeßlen, 2000, p.4).

tackling migrant issues with humour in recent Turkish-German films, do not find expression in *Dealer*.

Once again, Arslan locates his film in Berlin Kreuzberg, which, even more than in *Brothers and Sisters*, appears grey, wrecked, and hopeless. The city is ‘reduced essentially to a small number of marginalised sites of socioeconomic exclusion’ (Gallagher, 2006, p.345). The signposting of *Brothers and Sisters* is not reflected in *Dealer*. In fact, nothing makes Berlin Kreuzberg stand out as a particularly Turkish community (which was the case in *Brothers and Sisters*). With respect to the development in Turkish-German film, *Dealer* concentrates on Can’s story, without getting distracted by culturally locating the surroundings. As in *Brothers and Sisters*, Arslan does not attempt to portray a pure milieu study of Turkish-Germans in Berlin. Instead, he concentrates on the protagonist’s struggle between an almost bourgeois idea of his future with his girlfriend Jale and his daughter as well as his cold-blooded behaviour while pursuing his profession as a dealer and his lack of flexibility.

While *Brothers and Sisters* plays with cultural stereotypes in order to reveal the flaws of such stereotypes, *Dealer* does not feature cultural folklore such as a Turkish wedding or a Turkish tea ceremony. Also generational conflicts among first- and second-generation migrants are not thematised in *Dealer*. Several researchers understand the lack of these external cultural indicators in the Turkish-German films of that period as an indicator of the development from a *cinema of duty* to a *cinema of hybridity* (Dehn, 1999; Göktürk, 2000a; Burns, 2002; Gallagher, 2006). Yet, I intend to demonstrate that the film intentionally uses cultural clichés in the following sections.

In this sense, I do not agree with Sophia Matenaar, who suggests that *Dealer* is free from ghettocentrism (quoted in Gallagher, 2006, p.344), as Arslan has intentionally positioned his film in a criminal milieu and lets Can personify the stereotype of the criminal migrant. Nonetheless, the fact that Can narrates his story, which draws the sympathies of the audience towards him, seems to deconstruct such clichés. Arslan explores the conflict of being caught in the world of easy money and gives Can options for moving in different directions. For a while, it certainly looks, due to the pressure of his girlfriend, like he may manage to exit this criminal world, yet ultimately, his nature and pride draw him back to this criminal lifestyle.

In essence, he represents two stereotypes, the one of the criminal Turkish migrant versus the smug, almost stuffy idyll of the traditional German family. This

constellation brings cultural categorisations into juxtaposition. Through these two opposing worlds, Arslan rephrases the cultural hybridity of his protagonist by undermining widespread cultural stereotypes. Although he seems to resist the urge to put questions of identity and integration into the foreground, Arslan admits to portraying stereotypes: 'one can maybe try to go through them, which means to proceed from them, to use them in order to gradually disseminate them, so something else can be visible' (Arslan quoted in Dehn, 1999)⁶⁷.

In the following sections, I will discuss the different options Arslan proposes for Can's search for belonging and examine the extent to which his situation in-between these worlds influences his sense of home.

4.2 Can's Search for Belonging

The longing for happiness (Suchsland, 2005) enforced by a life in crisis and the constant feeling of loneliness are integral to *Dealer*. Most certainly, Can suffers from a lack of stability and a real point of reference that provides a basis for a feeling of belonging. Clearly, Can's external conflict supports and enforces his internal struggles. He is trapped between his family and his criminal life – two cultures in essence. Yet, in reference to Bhabha's third space (Bhabha, 1994), this threshold, this interstitial space, is not a place that helps him develop feelings of belonging or happiness. Furthermore, Can's situation between the two worlds does not provide new options of negotiation and identity construction, and certainly no home. One world precludes the other, and yet Can cannot live without either of them. This struggle between these two worlds is visualised through Arslan's camera, as Halle notes: 'Can is confused, even at a loss, but it is the camera that works to display this state visually' (2008, p.151).

Brothers and Sisters, the first film of the Berlin trilogy, was already beyond a pure depiction of Turkish-German youth, a *métissage* of everyday situations, the reality of cultural hybrids and formal compression, which covered a particular and even necessary distance to the topic of Turkish-Germans through the detailed observation of the protagonists and their lives. *Dealer* goes a step further with filmic

⁶⁷ 'man kann vielleicht versuchen, durch sie hindurchzugehen, das heißt von ihnen auszugehen, sie zu benutzen, um sie dann nach und nach aufzulösen, so daß anderes sichtbar werden kann' (Arslan quoted in Dehn, 1999).

formalities. Thereby, the film gains its own rhythm characterised by the sequence of dialogue scenes followed by close-ups of the protagonist Can from the side in front of mostly blurred backgrounds. The face and its expressions dominate the frames while the surroundings do not seem to matter. With these often long, emphatic, and recurring scenes, which generally take place on the streets, Arslan creates a space for Can that is detached from his surroundings. He gazes in abstraction, and thus, seems to be in his own world of thoughts. This sensation is enforced by the drowning out of the street sounds through the recurring melancholic music. These moments of silence create a space between his two worlds, while the world around him continues to turn; he is disconnected from these two aspects of his life, and his longing for happiness is never fulfilled. In these recurring scenes the film experiences a caesura, pulling the audience out of the course of the events, providing a moment of stillness, almost otherworldliness, which is emphasised by the use of gloomy music. The artificial soundtrack of the film consists of the same recurring melancholic track, which returns only in these close-up scenes, which detect any movement in Can's face and highlight his struggle and disorientation. These moments could be moments of epiphany for him, moments in which he could choose another direction for his life. Yet, this never happens. The prison neither suggests salvation nor the chance to restart a new life, as for example, for Elif in Başer's *Farewell to False Paradise* (1988). For Can, this is the final destination. Arslan's camera accompanies Can in his struggle and eventually his downfall. Similarly, as is the case with Deniz in *A Fine Day*, each scene of the film features Can (except for the final sequences). Thereby, the illusion of an objective observation of 'a subjective point of view' (Abel, 2013, p.50) is created. Each sequence follows the one before, drawing Can's vortex down, which leads him to prison. Arslan generally moves his camera horizontally, depicting one scene after the other. This results in the absence of a climax, which again concurs with Arslan's tendency to give each scene the same significance without singling out key scenes. Despite its gangster genre elements, the entire film is not designed to create suspense using gradually evolving scenes, supportive soundtrack, or surprising turns. Through his 'aesthetic of reduction' (Suchsland, 2005) and his close observance of the protagonist, he reaches a particular point of tension that is neither driven by suspense nor by surprise effects but through the nearness of the audience and the created emotional attachment with Can. Arslan himself speaks of a:

[...] strategy of deceleration, which opens up the opportunity to approximate to the situation which does not instantaneously jump at the audience⁶⁸ (Arslan quoted in Nicodemus, 1997).

His frequent lengthy and sustained shots, which allow a close and unobstructed look at the character(s), suggest his affinity to French directors, such as Godard, Rohmer, and Truffaut, and reaffirms his affiliation to the Berlin school of filmmaking. His camera concentrates on Can as well as his point of view, and Arslan frequently allows the shot on Can's face to last just a little bit longer, procrastinating the expected cut. Contrasting this passivity and slow pace, Arslan repeatedly uses jump cuts (Mikos, 2008, p.219) between inside and outside scenes, which can create confusion; yet here, by highlighting the discontinuity rather than the continuity, he accentuates the abrupt borders between the two worlds. The audience does not see Can's physical transition from one world to the other as is displayed in Arslan's *A Fine Day*, where he highlights Deniz's moments of physical transition by focusing on escalator rides, stairs, and means of public transit, reflecting her comfort in switching between worlds or living in between. Can, on the other hand, neither has these transitional moments nor does he have the pleasure to find happiness within the worlds. The returning jump cuts also do not allow the audience to get comfortable, interrupts the observing camera, and reveals the artificiality of the film, thereby achieving a particular alertness of the audience.

In the film, when Can returns to his flat at night for the first time, after hiding his drugs under the bathtub, Arslan uses the same melancholic keyboard sounds of the opening credits (00:04:49–00:05:32). The audience can see peaceful trees and Can's silhouette looking out at the trees. It appears as if he needs this thoughtful moment in order to get back to his family life, before going to bed beside his girlfriend and his daughter. The camera pans away from Can's silhouette, and this enforces a feeling of melancholy and a sense of being lost. Even though the audience is aware of his presence, Can remains a shadow at the threshold of his two worlds, and he seems to belong to neither of them entirely. Krystian Woznicki suggests that Can is caught between 'demimonde and underworld'⁶⁹ (Woznicki, 2011). Still, there are potential crossing points between the worlds: Can's job intrudes into his family life several

⁶⁸ 'Strategie der Verlangsamung, die dem Zuschauer die Möglichkeit eröffnet, sich einer Sache zu nähern, die einen nicht so anspringt.' (Arslan quoted in Nicodemus, 1997).

⁶⁹ 'Halb- und Unterwelt' (Woznicki, 2011).

times. However, these crossings are always harmful to Can, which is reflected in his secretive behaviour of hiding his drugs under the family's bathtub and his negative reaction to Zeki's unwanted and unexpected visit to buy drugs. Can is reminded not to cross over to the other worlds not only by his girlfriend but also by the Turkish neighbour who speaks to him angrily in Turkish, when he is dealing in the house where both live (00:09:55-00:10:18). The German-speaking audience, due to the lack of subtitles, is kept in the dark about the content of the conversation. She switches to German, yet, the angry tone of her voice makes it clear from the beginning that Can is in trouble. This code switching highlights the clashing of the cultures and the apparent ease of crossing between them. However, to the audience, the disruption is more abrupt and results in confusion and alienation. Arslan openly displays differences without intervening (for example through the use of subtitles), leaving the spectator alone, torn between the familiar and the foreign, which makes the conflict between the worlds tangible to them, while the characters master it with an apparent ease. Thereby, Arslan destabilises the apparent superiority of the German-only-speaking audience by preventing them from understanding the words and forces the audience to experience a moment of exclusion.

This is one of the few scenes that reveal the Turkish surroundings in this film. As noted before, *Dealer* lacks the obvious signposts of *Brothers and Sisters*. The audience gains the understanding that the film is set in a Turkish-German environment more often through implicit hints than explicit markers. In contrast to *Brothers and Sisters*, Arslan portrays the Turkish-German community less as a microcosm of German culture but more as being blended into the German surroundings. However, noticeable mostly intrinsically, the entire film is set in a Turkish-German setting, in which the Germans, who generally are Can's clients, appear as intruders. Whether the two boys from Ludwigsburg who buy drugs from Can or the club visitors; Germans are portrayed as strangers who do not belong to the world on screen. In this sense, the Germans are the others, 'those who were different' (see Chapter 1, Papastergiadis, 2000, p.103), while the film is told from Can's perspective, who is a Turkish-German. Again, Arslan plays with the strict dichotomic understanding of culture. Here, I think especially of Huntington's highly criticised theory of the clashes of civilisations (1996), which suggests that conflicts based on cultural or religious differences are the norm. Opposing such essentialist approaches, Arslan rather reveals their growing inapplicability in contemporary societies by subverting them and presenting

predominantly blurred cultural boundaries instead. However, with *Dealer*, he does not necessarily take on the role of an advocate of researchers, such as Bhabha (1994) and Joseph (1999), who celebrate ‘cultural hybridity as a means to challenge and overcome political and cultural domination’ (Chapter 1, p.8), but rather points out that cultural differences have not yet lost their polarising character in Can’s case, even though they might be interchangeable and at times enforced.

Again, Arslan sends his characters onto the streets. Yet, this apparent flexibility does not take effect as Can is not made more mobile. While the protagonists of the other Berlin trilogy films are, when outside, generally walking through the streets, *Dealer* uses the stagnancy of the characters to captivate. Most exterior scenes show Can and his colleagues standing around, gazing into space, and waiting for his clients. Here, Arslan’s camera reminds the viewer of Angela Schanelec’s films⁷⁰, particularly the cinematography in *I stayed in Berlin for the summer*⁷¹(1994).

This does not create a sense of tranquillity but rather a hopelessness of Can’s battle. Here, the streets do not represent the option of developing an emancipated identity; rather, they reflect a prison for Can. The question of exclusion in *Dealer* becomes a question of containment. Worthmann underlines this by noting that ‘Can is a prisoner long before he is in prison’ (quoted in Gallagher, 2006, p.346). Can cannot leave Berlin, which is reflected in his words: ‘Why shouldn’t I be in the city, where else should I go idiot?’⁷² (01:01:40). This sequence is evocative of Erol in *Brothers and Sisters*. Can is caught in Berlin Kreuzberg and does not know much about the world outside this district, which is revealed by the fact that he does not know where Ludwigsburg is. While leaving for Turkey seems to be Erol’s salvation, Can does not have such an exit strategy from Kreuzberg. Different from *Brothers and Sisters*, Can does not have places of refuge, rather several battlefields. His nature as a dealer lets him move along marginalised spaces, generally in the exterior. Even when he is selling drugs at a club, he cannot stay inside for very long as he needs to flee from the police. This pattern is also reflected in his other world. He is being pushed out both from his suburb and his flat by the Turkish neighbour as well as by his girlfriend. The interior neither provides him shelter nor a home. As in *Brothers and Sisters*, converting the

⁷⁰ As mentioned in Chapter 2, Angela Schanelec is a representative of the first wave of the Berlin School of Filmmaking. She even acts in a small role in *Dealer* (Abel, 2013, p.32).

⁷¹ *Ich bin den Sommer über in Berlin geblieben*, Schanelec, 1994.

⁷² ‘Warum soll ich nicht mehr in der Stadt sein, wo soll ich hin, Idiot’ (01:01:40).

exterior to the space where he can exist stands in contrast to earlier Turkish-German films, which generally placed the migrant protagonists in the interior as the only place where they could freely live (see Chapter 2). By allowing his characters to leave the flat, Arslan also mixes the different worlds for them, creating a culturally hybrid initial situation for Can, yet the described exclusion through containment reflects the potential drawbacks of cultural hybridity as proposed in Chapter 1.

Can's attempt to leave the streets by taking up a regular job in a restaurant kitchen fails. With regard to the chosen professions, legal and illegal, Arslan instrumentalises cultural clichés. While the fact that Can is a drug dealer exploits the stereotypical criminal migrant, his temporary job as a kitchen porter portrays the stereotypical other option for migrants of working in the hospitality industry. Ultimately, neither of these options work for Can. His criminal life drives him away from his family and he ends up in prison, while the legal work does not fulfil him and he cannot withstand his pride.

The contrast between these two worlds is also underlined by Can's eating habits. The audience never sees him eating while out in his criminal world, which is even pointed out by Hakan. On the other hand, at his flat, he is frequently shown eating. This contrast depicts the different frames of mind he is dealing with in his different worlds. While pursuing his work, he always seems uneasy and cautious of his surroundings, as if he is constantly suspecting something around the corner. He is generally seen leaning on a wall, watching out for clients, and at the same time for potential threats, such as the police. According to Maslow's pyramid of needs (1987), the need for physical survival, which includes food, needs to be satisfied before a need for social belonging can be approached. Therefore, the fact that he never eats outside his flat may indicate the impossibility of his finding a place of belonging there. His flat instead seems to provide more stability to him, which increases its potential to be(come) a place of belonging. Yet, his places of belonging are not Nora's *lieux de mémoire* (1996), but rather a place in the future that is gradually revealed throughout the film as an unreachable utopia. Both his home with his family as well as his potential future as bar manager are doomed to be lost, which the audience ultimately witness throughout the film.

As all of Arslan's trilogy films, *Dealer* begins with a shot of a window from the point of view of the protagonist's bed. As opposed to the windows in *Brothers and Sisters* and also *A Fine Day*, where the audience can actually see out of the window

and notice clouds and blue skies, *Dealer* starts with a shot on a window with the drapes seemingly closed, before panning to Can lying in his bed. As Ahmed in *Brothers and Sisters* and Deniz in *A Fine Day*, Can stares out of the window lost in thought, outside industrialised apartment blocks. In all three films, the infiltrating natural sounds from the outside world are notable. The family is filmed in their bed, supposedly a place of highest comfort and safety, while the penetrating outside sounds suggest the existence of another world that may or may not threaten or challenge this place of shelter and belonging. In *Dealer*, the first scene exudes peacefulness, with Jale and her daughter sleeping and the birds singing outside. This idyll is interrupted by Can, who gazes into space, lost in thought. Already early in the film, in this moment, his (evolving) struggle is indicated. The look out of the window could entail a promise. Yet, these shots give the feeling of being trapped. The half-closed drapes, which later allow a sight on the outside scenery of the grey, industrialised apartment blocks, so typical of Berlin Kreuzberg of the 1990s, where one resembles the other and any individuality seems to be nipped in the bud, exude hopelessness. Even though Arslan lets his characters leave the interior, the view through the window underlines the difference between the two worlds, the protected inside and the hostile exterior, suggesting that crossing the threshold between these worlds can be painful. Thereby, he epitomises the identity conflict resulting from the struggle between cultures as outlined in Chapter 1. This divergence is also portrayed by the contrast between the beautiful nature and the wrecked, shabby buildings. *Dealer* shows unrecognisable streets and buildings, shabby industrial and shady back alleys, which Arslan contrasts with beautiful nature shots, green, lush trees, and the colours of summer, referencing to a particular Ur-Heimat of primal landscapes (Herrmann, 2012, p.161). He thereby creates two contrasting worlds and questions ideas of such a utopian home.

Dealer is more conventional in terms of the film techniques than *Brothers and Sisters* as well as *A Fine Day*, which has the effect that it is easier to consume for the audience, potentially contributing to the popularity of the film. Arslan uses a soundtrack frequently; the outside sounds are less penetrating, and he violates less cinematic conventions, such as the 180-degree rule. Still, his affiliation to the Berlin School of filmmaking (see Chapter 2) is evident, as *Dealer* is characterised by a minimal use of filmic means and the long observing shots on the protagonist, detailed glimpses of the character's faces as well as concise dialogues. In general, *Dealer* is a rather graphic film. The combination of the staging of the mise-en-scène, the use of

sounds and the soundtrack as well as the particular way of observing the characters creates an intensity of the story that does not only merely represent the life of the protagonist, but also solidifies the sense of the film. In *Dealer*, Arslan uses Can's voice-over to provide a frame for the film and to explain Can's world of feelings. At times, it almost seems unnecessary, as the situation and Can's mimic and gestures already indicate the circumstances. Yet, it does have the effect of personalising the story that gives way for a deeper identification with Can. Nonetheless, the voice-over takes away from Arslan's observing style as it steers the audience to a certain extent. The image details chosen tell half the story already. Arslan often blocks half of it with doors, walls and fences, which emphasises Can's limited mobility, yet they also suggest the inevitable bad ending for Can.

The question of change, which Arslan is always intrigued by, is also significant in *Dealer*. However, Arslan proposes a different idea of change as opposed to approaches that 'share an understanding of difference as constituting a difference from a prior (representation of) identity' (Abel, 2012, p.46). This is most obvious in Can's last sentence of the film, right after Jale says her final goodbyes at the prison: 'Strange, how everything changes'⁷³ (00:01:46). Arslan uses Can's voice-over for this sentence once more and a panning shot of the now empty park, where Can used to sell drugs. Accompanied by diegetic piano sounds, the final five static shots, each lasting between seven and ten seconds, remind the audience of the places of Can's encounters throughout the film, now empty, even lifeless: the shabby street corner, where he and his drug dealer colleagues used to wait for clients, the entrance of the building, where Can had the uncomfortable conversation with the Turkish lady, who threatened to call the police, the kitchen, where he tried his luck with a legal job but ultimately failed, his empty flat, that used to be colourful, filled with life and concluding with what could be called an establishing shot onto the same grey high-rises at night, which were shown before during the day in one of the earliest scenes of the film.

Several researchers, including Burns (2007) and Gallagher (2006) suggest that nothing has changed underlining the irony of this last sentence, while Abel supports the idea that Arslan's work deals with 'how change or pure difference can be imaged or rendered sensible' (Abel, 2012, p.50). I believe that Arslan indeed takes both approaches, as he certainly points out the irony of change by displaying Can's

⁷³ 'Seltsam, wie sich alles ändert.'

everyday places as empty, disconnected and unchanged spaces following his final sentence. Ultimately, the screen turns black before the ending credits roll. This goes along with the overemphasis of the physicality of change marked by the empty spaces, which the audience is familiar with from the film; yet, the way Arslan shows these places at the end of the film with a static camera, jump-cutting from one empty space to another, suggests that they are no longer the places that they used to be. Once more, this antagonism signifies Can's struggle that is doomed to remain unresolved and ultimately leaves behind hopelessness. Can's disembodied voice-over, which accompanies these scenes, appears to exist outside of any temporal or spatial continuum (see Abel, 2012, p.53), and therefore, underlines his inability to truly intervene in this circle of change and immutability. While in *A Fine Day*, we see the struggling Deniz making her way in that third space between the one and the other, and *Brothers and Sisters* depicts different ways of dealing with either, Can does not have these choices. His different worlds do not create something new, but rather catch him in a circle, where any change ends up without a transferred result, and which thereby enforces the understanding that a bridge between these worlds cannot be built.

There are several recurring characters in this film that function as symbols for the different influences on Can's struggle. Jale, Can's girlfriend, Erdal, the police officer, Zeki, the drug addict, Hakan, the boss, and the childhood friend. Each of these constellations stand for another aspect of Can's longing for belonging. By personifying different directions Can could (have) take(n) in his life, Arslan intensifies his struggle. On the one hand, Can is a father, who attempts to pursue a legal life. On the other hand, there is the criminal Can, who underlines stereotypical clichés about the criminal migrant. Both aspects of Can's life stand in contrast and could eradicate the respective other as a place of belonging.

4.2.1 Can, the Father: The Family as a Place of Belonging

The family is very often considered as a shelter and a place of belonging, which results in the feeling of home and the family as the centre of life and provides a point of reference and functions as an identity marker (see Chapter 1). In Can's case, it is not a place of unconditional love and support (Chapter 1). Jale puts him under pressure to change his life and he mostly appears more like a stranger at his flat. Yet, his deep sense of care for his daughter is ever-present, and Burns suggests that the scenes with

her educate 'the domestic happiness which, under different circumstances might have given Can's life a more solid foundation' (2007, p.18). Due to the criminal life, which is the thorn in Jale's side, but justified by Can's traditional understanding of the father as bread-winner, his family life cannot be this haven of belongingness, and this leaves Can restless.

Jale's character has rarely received scholarly attention. She is portrayed as a strong, independent woman, who does not need any help to take care for herself and her daughter. She has her own job and friends. Her life is not restricted to her family life. Yet, in most scenes, she is depicted at their flat with her daughter. This limitation to the interiors reflects the earlier portrayals of Turkish-German women in Turkish-German films (e.g., *40 Square Meter of Germany*). Jessica Gallagher stresses this as the 'limited urban space available to Jale' indicates that she inhabits 'the restrictive and claustrophobic spaces experienced by earlier female characters in the Turkish-German Gastarbeiterkino'⁷⁴ (2006, p.348). However, she is still somewhat less caught in Berlin Kreuzberg than Can, which is underlined by her plan to go to Portugal for vacation. Clearly, her confinement can be related to her relationship to Can. Leaving Can means to her the beginning of a new, potentially better life. Different from Can, she is rather emotionless and 'willing to take an active part in determining her own existence' (Leal, Rosade and Keynes, 2008, p.77). While Jale and their daughter seem to be Can's last branch, which could get him out of the criminal life, Can limits Jale in pursuing a self-chosen existence. Here, Arslan again plays with cultural stereotypes and clichés of a traditional home. In order for Jale to find happiness and her true place of belonging, she needs to break free from the traditional father-mother-child life with Can. At the same time, Can's attempt to pursue a legal life, thereby defying the cultural stereotype of the criminal migrant, is tied to Jale and their daughter, thus stands in contrast to Jale's intentions of determining her own life. At first, it appears as if Jale also leaves Can relatively emotionless; however, throughout the film, it becomes clear that he cares for her very much. Whether it is a surprise gift or his willingness and attempt to change his life for her, he proves his sense of cares for Jale. Indeed, he fights for her. Yet, his adventure in the legal world does not last very long, and essentially, he gives up and goes back to his job as a dealer. Ultimately, he loses his family.

⁷⁴ guest-worker cinema

Arslan displays the intimacy and affection among the family members with unspectacular, small gestures, such as Can stroking a strand of hair out of Jale's face or Can's bus ride with his daughter. By observing such ordinary and elevating mundane situations, Arslan creates a natural nearness to the characters. The scene (00:08:04–00:08:24) on the bus with Can and his daughter includes no dialogue; yet, it could not be filled with more intensity. Arslan's close-up shot of his daughter's hand on his hand, which is dissolved in a medium close-up shot, followed by showing how she sleeps in his arms on the bus to her childminder exudes a feeling of intimacy and deep care. However, this peaceful sensation is disturbed by Can's thoughtful gaze into space, which creates the feeling of detachment and not belonging. Similar to the scene in the family bed in the beginning of this film, Can here seems to be standing in his own way with regard to his home. Moments like these that denote apparent peacefulness, love and belonging, are diminished by his restlessness and his inability to fully remain in one of his worlds.

The problematic relationship between Jale and Can is shown in the early scenes in the film. Any time they meet, she confronts him with his life choices and demands a change. She does not trust him either, even with their daughter, and this becomes evident when he offers to pick her up and Jale refuses it. During these arguments, he always promises change for the better, up to the point of self-deception. However, he seems to avoid potential serious confrontation with his girlfriend. This gets obvious when he, following Jale's demand for a talk, promises to come home early, but instead, the audience sees one of Arslan's close-up shots on his face, gazing into space, standing in a street at night, which turns out to be an avoidance of returning to his flat.

Arslan shoots most of the one-on-one couple conversations between Can and Jale throughout the entire film similarly. The scenes are static close-up shots of Can's side profile, while Jale sits at a straight angle to the camera. It is worth noting that the camera is focused on Jale, while Can remains slightly blurred. This is an indication that Can does not entirely belong to the same world as Jale does. Their discussions revolve around their relationship and their future together and are generally marked by Jale's reproaches and Can's naïve hopes and excuses. Thus, also on a conversational level, they exist in different dimensions, underlining once again the fact that Can lacks the sense of belonging to Jale. The fact that his girlfriend and the mother of his child does not fulfil his need of belonging may conclude that his home is not with her.

Their flat is another indicator for this lacking home at home for Can. It is portrayed as a cosy yet stuffy place. Items that may individualise the place and personal decorations cannot be found, except for the tapestry, which is also the only indication for the inhabitants' Turkish background. The flat with its wallpaper and the old furniture resembles the 1970s. Not only does this create a feeling as if time has stopped in this flat, but the wallpaper may also signify its inhabitants' struggle. It seems ragtag and unsettled. There are three different types of wallpapers in the flat, which create a certain unrest and does not add to a peaceful, homey feeling. The wallpapers are different and unmatched, and does not belong to the other, which essentially seems to resemble the situation of Can and his family. As a contrast, the colourful bed sheets give the feeling of cosiness and indeed shelter. Through the open windows, only peaceful sounds, such as birds singing, children playing and rustling trees enter the flat. This feeling is emphasised by the frequent shots on Jale and her daughter (also Can) sleeping arm in arm in that bed. Yet, even though these aspects may promise a warm, welcoming feeling, it seems to only be restricted to Jale and her daughter. Can is a stranger in his own flat.

Alone, without his family in the flat, he is apathetic, watching TV, exuding hopelessness and a sense of resignation. Clearly, Can's purpose in life has been threatened and is potentially lost. Arslan's observing, empathic camera fortifies this sensation for the audience. The intensity of the struggle Can is dealing with also becomes evident when he breaks his own rule of not taking his own drugs. Can's voice-over narrates this to the audience in the very beginning of the film. By breaking this rule in the course of the film, Arslan highlights the rapid deterioration in Can's life. Essentially, this turning point drives him to return to the streets. His voice-over explains that he finds himself unable to calm down. The next scene shows him in the bathroom, getting the drugs from his hiding place under the bathtub. He looks lost yet determined. In the following scene, we see him preparing the drugs. He was recently arrested and left by his family. A feeling that he has reached a dead-end in his life culminates with him preparing the drugs. It is clear that he will take them, yet this remains hidden from the audience.

Another scene, with respect to his sense of belonging, is notable. It takes place at a tailor's store, a stereotypical Turkish workplace (00:40:39–00:42:09). Can speaks Turkish with an old man, which excludes the German audience entirely. The length of the scene and the absence of subtitles create a particular discomfort in the German-

speaking viewer. The content of the conversation remains hidden behind the foreign language. However, the audience can detect that the old man was well-meaning towards Can. Their tone of voice is intimate and friendly. Turkish language skills would reveal that this is a visit at Can's father's workplace, whom Can asks for advice regarding Jale. At the same time, Can's father tells him that the situation at the family shop is grim, and that his mother has had a second breakdown. His father cherishes the hope that Can would have taken over the business, yet Can's answer towards this desire 'You know that kind of work does not appeal to me' highlights his failure to use options that are put in his way. The fact that he says this after his attempt to get Jale back through a legal job in a restaurant shows his indecisiveness and inability to take one path entirely. In contrast to the authoritative stereotypical Turkish father figure, as for example portrayed in *Yasemin* (1988), Can's father is portrayed as kind and understanding. Arslan's shooting of the scene enforces the feeling of intimacy. With close-up shots, he focuses on both Can and his father, without violating the 180-degree rule. This keeps the scene, which lasts for one and a half minutes calm and allows the audience to focus on the facial expressions of the two in order to get a glimpse of the meaning of the foreign words. Arslan's technique of excluding the German-only-speaking audience from the conversation creates a feeling of foreignness, yet highlights the familiarities and similarities at the same time through the camera's focus, which reveals the characters' emotions, and this transfers Can's turmoil onto the audience and erupts strict polarities. Despite their familiarity and nearness, the conversation and his detachment from his father's lifestyle exposes Can's lack of belongingness.

Even though this part of Can's life is filled with love and friendship and the potential for belonging is high, in all of the situations described above, Can is somewhat excluded and does not entirely belong to the involved people, and therefore, the need for a home cannot be fulfilled.

4.2.2 The Stereotypical Criminal Can: The Other Place of Belonging

Can's illegal life as a dealer stands in conflict with his life as a father. He struggles to balance these lives, and is yet forced by Jale to make a decision. The characters he meets in this world have the tendency to be shady and have their personal fights. There is Zeki, the drug addict, who sells his body for his addiction, Erdal, the

police officer, who appears to care for Can, and Hakan, Can's boss, who seems to be moving on the sunny side of the criminal street, yet turns out to be as struggling to keep his head up against competition, which ultimately kills him.

The pairs of Erdal and Hakan and Can's childhood friend and Zeki represent the opposite spectra of possible pathways respectively (see Strehle, 2012). Hakan and Erdal represent the stereotypical option for Turkish-Germans, a criminal life versus a straight life (see Leal, Rosade and Keynes, 2008). Hakan, the criminal, allures Can with easy money and legitimises his power over him by saying 'Everything you know, you have learned from me'⁷⁵. Arslan portrays Hakan as an arrogant impostor, draped with gold chains, and being a pretentious Davidoff smoker, indicating his looming failure. Arslan enforces the feeling of inviolability with the scene in the restaurant in particular. With one look he sends Can's colleagues away. Arslan uses a medium close-up shot of the two in this scene. As soon as Can tells his worries about not being taken seriously, Arslan changes perspective from Can's side profile and Hakan's front profile to Hakan's side profile and Can's front profile (00:18:47–00:20:29). This allows the audience to detect any movement in Can's face but at the same time puts Can somewhat in a pleading position. This scene highlights Can's blind deference and naivety. He tries to grab the last straw to change his life and in essence to keep his family. Yet, the entire scene underlines Hakan's untrustworthiness, which however, is not detected by Can yet. Can's loyalty to Hakan as his confidant prevents him from betraying Hakan to the police, which Erdal constantly demands of him. Hakan's pretentious behaviour and false promises allure Can as it augurs a way out of his criminal life. However, Hakan's death breaks his false image of the big, untouchable boss and ultimately shatters Can's dreams of his own bar, and thereby his utopia of a place of belonging outside of the criminal life. In essence, Hakan portrays the bad father figure who Can is tied to through criminal obligations and a potential threat of his life. Can desperately looks for a way out and in essence for a place of belonging for himself and his family so much so that he is naïve enough to believe that Hakan's intentions are honest, even though Hakan most likely will not keep his word.

The police officer Erdal, who seems to follow Can like a shadow, could be understood as the opposite of Hakan. He is a rather shabby looking Turkish-German, who chose a legal life, the life of a police officer. However, he does not necessarily

⁷⁵ 'Alles was du weißt, hast du von mir gelernt'.

appear to reflect the stereotypical police officer with his wrecked leather jacket, dishevelled hair, and choice of words. Yet, he is always on Can's side and tries to help him leave the streets, also by threatening to take him in. His true intentions are unknown to the audience. Can is suspicious of him. Erdal seems to always be around and randomly approaches him to essentially find out more about the instigators of his drug business. Can is worried about these encounters as they might put his loyalty into question. He lies to Erdal and obviously does not consider him as a friend. Ultimately, Erdal is the reason for the dispersion for both of Can's worlds. In the end, it is clear that he has lost his family, as Jale will not wait for him to get out of prison after four years and his option to live in Germany as he will most likely be deported eventually. In essence, the worst of all cases and yet the only expected consequence with regards to Can's life is elicited by Erdal.

Both Hakan and Erdal offer Can their kind of help, which is associated with a vested interest on their side and is ultimately rejected by Can. Hakan, the boss, offers him a way out of the criminal life by becoming the manager of a bar, which essentially he will use for money laundering, and therefore, would keep Can on the illegal side (which becomes obsolete with Hakan's death), while Erdal offers him an exit by betraying his boss, which his pride and personality would not allow. Thus, neither option can be pursued to the end and could eventually support the home-making process with his family. Again, Arslan uses the method of contrasting; here, he draws on exaggerated stereotypes and thereby ridicules these options of alternative spaces of belonging.

Zeki and the childhood friend, who remains nameless, also represent contrasting stereotypical options a Turkish-German can pursue in a German society. Zeki the drug addict sells his body in order to satisfy his need for drugs. In this case, the world of drugs is an escape from the real world in which he obviously struggles to get by. Similar to Ahmed in *Brothers and Sisters*, Can's childhood friend suggests education as an access point for choosing his own life path. He tries to convince him to take on a regular job and even offers him a job at his uncle's restaurant. Undoubtedly, he wants what is best for Can. With this character, Arslan introduces a Turkish-German young man who seems to master his cultural hybridity well. While studying law, a subject that is generally associated with the educated German middle class (catapulting him outside of Turkish clichés), he has not cut his ties with his Turkish community, which is underlined by his attempt to help Can with a legal job.

Clearly, the boundaries of Berlin Kreuzberg have become permeable for him, reinforcing the potential of education to overcome such cultural, ghettoising restrictions as suggested in *Brothers and Sisters* before. Yet, Can's lifestyle, mimics, and reluctant behaviour towards his childhood friend suggest that this path does not apply to him.

Zeki, the drug addict, represents the most self-destructive path, the path of complete failure and non-existent hope. The search for belonging in the blurred world of drugs that provides a deceiving anchor through the complete departure from reality into a world where nothing matters shows another potential direction Can's life could take. Here, the utopian aspect of home is pushed towards a self-destructive, self-denying extreme. Ultimately, this character gives the dealer Can a human face, yet buttresses his constant play at the edge. We do not know whether Can actually steps over the edge by taking his own drugs. Essentially, Zeki betrays Can and acts as an informer for the police, which ultimately leads to Can's arrest.

The audience understands how Can is different from the other criminals, especially due to the encounters with these two characters. At the same time, they expose his flaws and inability to decisively choose either the criminal life or the legal life. Even though he is not depicted in any heroic way, the sympathies of the audience are certainly with Can. Zeki even says that he is different than the others, yet Can cannot fully live up to the viewers' expectations built up by the intimate portrayal of Can. The scene when Zeki gets beaten up by his colleagues summarises his inability to really step out of one behaviour and behave according to his morals (00:26:46–00:28:41). The scene takes place at night in a deserted street. It is preluded by Can and his colleagues driving in a car and accompanied with the same returning melancholic music and was filmed without artificial lights, only lit by the outside street lamps. Nobody speaks; all three of them seem to be lost in thought.

After Arslan's establishing shot of the three, he focuses on Can's side profile, which once again allows the audience to be submerged in Can's melancholic thoughtfulness. With the following jump-cut to the front view of the street out of the car, Arslan proves the power of his observant camera. The audience sees the street from Can's perspective. The three watch Zeki the drug addict and male prostitute leaning towards a (potential) client in a car, simply observing him for a while. There is a certain suspense in the air, a clear indicator that something bad is about to happen. Can attempts to make them continue the drive; also, he can feel the imminent calamity.

His colleagues use their self-proclaimed business smartness as pretence to get out of the car and talk to Zeki. Can once again looks absent-minded, lost in thought. He stays in the car while the others leave the car. They clearly ask for trouble by provoking Zeki. He does not lose his temper; yet they still start to beat him up. The camera observes the scene until it switches with a medium close-up shot to Can in the car. The series of blows can be heard. The switches between the scene of the beating up and Can's face make it clear that Can has been observing the scene sadly, yet indifferently. Dehn's description of Can as 'prisoner of his own indecisiveness' (Dehn, 1999, p.13) is most evident here. Despite his disagreement with the actions of his colleagues and his unexplained attachment to Zeki, he does not move and just stares at the scene. This underlines his inability to take sides, which ultimately can be transferred onto his inability to live only one of his two lives entirely. The feeling that he is detached from his surroundings is enforced by the very same stare in the beginning of the next scene, which takes place in a club and therefore is a complete change of scenery. Once again, Arslan's style, including the observing camera, absence of artificial lighting and music, suggest a particular naturalism which is revoked by his unconventional cutting (frequent use of jump-cuts) and his frequent use of overly long, static shots. While Burns (2007) suggests that Arslan attempts to create a distance between the audience and the character in order to prevent them from feeling pity for him, I believe that these long shots, which transmit any facial movement, any emotion, do in fact create attachment to and a certain identification with the character of Can, as despite his inability to prove his morality by not engaging in the beating, he remains the most humane of the three. Arslan does not stylise Can to a hero, yet he provides him with a particular dignity, which creates empathy towards him.

Through the encounters with these four characters, Arslan deconstructs the demand that 'minority cinema should depict alternatives for their characters' (Stehle, 2012, p.79) up to the level of a persiflage. By exploring the criminal migrant with an almost sarcastic point of view, Arslan puts such stereotyping into question. Both of these contrasting pairs form the opposite ends of a spectrum depicting Can's potential life paths, neither of which he chooses. The dilemma in which Can is caught, through Arslan's targeted formalism narrative and *mise-en-scène*, is depicted as not solvable.

4.3 Belonging and Home in Dealer

Arslan depicts the story of *Dealer* in a factual and condensed form. He resists the temptation to use sentimental elements and to create suspension. In the manner of *Brothers and Sisters*, he portrays his protagonist with all of his rough edges and without the intention of catching the audience's sympathies for his protagonist. However, through the close accompaniment of Can and the way the story is told from his point of view through his voice-over, Arslan draws the sympathies of the spectators and compassion towards him. The film has an overall melancholic mood. *Dealer* has been described as '[a] far-off external dramatics, precisely developed existentialistic story, which visualizes the very differentiated situation of a person, who is losing all bonds and (life) goals'⁷⁶ (Zweitausendeins Filmlexikon, 2015). As the other two films of Arslan's trilogy, the loss of stability and the resulting longing for happiness (Suchsland, 2005) is the centre of this film. Certainly, Can is lost between two worlds. He cannot live without either of them. He cannot overcome his criminal tendencies, and thereby, he not only loses his family and a significant point of reference and a place of belonging; by getting caught, he also loses his freedom and access to his other place of belonging, the world as a dealer.

At the end of the film, once again, Arslan emphasises the connection between his protagonist and his places of dwelling. Arslan captures places Can once occupied, now desolate industrial sites, doorways, and the park, as if referring to Can's last statement of the film 'Strange how everything changes', he suggests with his images that in deed, all of Can's spaces have not changed at all and still exist even though he no longer inhabits them. As Burns suggests, 'the absence of any signs of human life in these scenes enhances the impression of a series of stills, the static nature of which both crystallises the overall rhythm of Arslan's film and contradicts the accompanying voice-over' (2007, p.373). I cannot go along with Ayça Tunç Cox, who proposes a second interpretation, suggesting that these scenes accompanied by Can's voice-over underline his connection to the places shown and that 'he is, first and foremost, a Berliner[...]' (quoted in Karanfil and Şavk, 2014, p.50). This overly enthusiastic reading withholds the inner turmoil that Can as a hybrid between his two worlds is

⁷⁶ 'Eine fern jeder äußeren Dramatik präzise entwickelte existentialistische Geschichte, die sehr differenziert die Situation eines Menschen vor Augen führt, dem alle Bindungen und (Lebens-)Ziele verloren gehen'.

suffering from. I would rather go along with Abel's approach, who declares these last scenes as '[t]he becoming-sensible of the force of change in the absence of any representation of change on screen' (Abel, 2012, p.48).

In essence, rather than explicitly thematising abstract notions like home, Arslan illuminates mundane details, which provides the potential to tackle the topic of home and belonging without exclusionary structures based on cultural heritage. Arslan remarks that in Germany, the relationship between Germans and Turks is:

[...]constricted to an allegedly all-pervasive antagonism of modernity and traditionalism, which embezzles the heterogeneity of the culture, which is categorised as strange and at the same time withholds and disguises the amalgamation and the development of the own (German) culture ⁷⁷ (quoted in Löser, 2004, p.141).

By unmasking such dichotomies and cultural categorisations, he proposes a perception, which refutes stereotypical thinking and the accompanying homogenisation of groups, and provides an awareness closer to reality.

The fact that he does not get in touch with many Germans (neither in his family life nor in his life on the streets) is decisive. The few Germans he meets are generally his clients. In essence, Arslan describes a microcosm in Berlin that exists separate from the surrounding Germans. In times of an increasing need for integration, this exclusionary description must be seen as a pointer towards the long-term German failure to foster a society that provides migrants with the same options as German-born people. The film does not offer a solution for Can and portrays Berlin Kreuzberg as a trap. The efforts of the other characters to provide Can a way out of his situation are rather dilettantish and turn out to be sarcastic potshots by Arslan towards the discussion of the alternatives of cultural hybridity. In fact, these alternatives are revealed as traps within a stagnating society.

Thus, Arslan does not enforce stereotyping, but uses it as a reference point for his explorations towards new modes of constructing places of belonging. Even though

⁷⁷ 'auf einen angeblich alles durchdringenden Gegensatz von Moderne und Traditionalismus verengt', ..'die Heterogenitäten der als fremd eingestuften Kultur unterschlagen und gleichzeitig die Vermischungen und das Gewordene der eigenen (deutschen) Kultur verschwiegen oder verschleiert' (quoted in Löser, 2004, p.141).

the identity of Turkish-Germans seems to not be of obvious concern for the film, the way of representing their situation may provide a new way of understanding the feeling of belonging, and therefore, of understanding the notion of home in cultural hybridity. Abel suggests that ‘Arslan’s primary concern does not lie with the question of identity, or rather if it does, then only insofar as he puts its underlying assumptions at stake’ (Abel, 2012, p.44). As outlined in Chapter 1, belonging, home and identity are inseparably connected. As traditional identity markers, such as family, profession, or culture are questioned, home-making processes also are questioned.

The cultural contrast between the two worlds Can is living in is used to unmask essentialist categorising and to underline his struggle resulting from the lack of a place of belonging and his torn identity. As in *Brothers and Sisters*, Arslan strives to challenge the victimised cliché-ridden portrayal of Turkish migrants in films about them. Yet, he consciously uses stereotypes in order to tell his story. Beyond a ‘social-worker cliché’ (Foerster, 1999), Arslan describes heterogenic structures via an extreme formal depth. He lays down the different directions Can could take through exaggerated clichés, thereby drawing cultural boundaries. As opposed to *Brothers and Sisters*, where Arslan reveals the permeability of cultural boundaries in culturally hybrid contexts, *Dealer* adopts a much more serious tone and describes the hopelessness of being caught in a net of self-fulfilling prophecies based on stereotypes. In other words, Arslan narrates a story about a young Turkish-German man who is torn between different clichés, which essentially destroys him.

The contrast between interior versus exterior, togetherness versus loneliness, modesty versus coolness, family life versus criminal life, accompanied by the visual juxtaposition of lived and empty spaces underline the dichotomy of the homes – the conflict in Can between the two worlds. In essence, Can neither belongs to both worlds nor to only one. Transferring this paradox onto the general situation of cultural hybrids may be exaggerated; Arslan seems to do this in order to insinuate the challenge and obsolescence of strict cultural categorising by the use of clichés and exaggeration. He does not provide another option in *Dealer*; while *Brothers and Sisters* offered different ways of living with cultural hybridity, *Dealer* is insofar a development, as he here clearly breaks open the binaries of cultural categorising and ridicules cultural stereotyping. Yet, this film reflects a reverse victimisation of Can, and therefore, takes on forms of the ‘cinema of duty’ (Malik, 1996). However, this victimisation is not based on cultural differences placed within a value scale. Rather, Can is a victim of

exactly such cultural stereotyping, which restricts his choices and eventually leaves him no room for escape. In the end, although Can has lost everything, even potentially his permit of residence in Germany, he seems the calmest during the entire film at its very end. His last sentence about change exudes a particular coming-to-terms feeling. Perhaps he did find peace in this lessness. Yet, he rejected any potential place of belonging and home.

5. A FINE DAY – A ‘MODERN’ MIGRANT STORY?

5.1 Preliminary Remarks

A Fine Day (2001) is the third and last part of Thomas Arslan’s Berlin trilogy, which deals with the lives of young second-generation Turkish migrants in the city of Berlin. In his function as director and screenwriter, Thomas Arslan had significant influence on the direction, the production, and the setting of the film. A number of critics and researchers have analysed the film with regards to its cinematic aesthetics, Arslan’s affiliation with the Berlin School of filmmaking (see Schick, 2007; Seeßlen, 2007; Knörer, 2009) and its meaning for Turkish-German cinema (Wewer, 2000; Löser, 2004; Abel, 2012). However, a more specific analysis of the portrayal of home and the interdependence between home and cultural hybridity in *A Fine Day* has not yet been conducted in academic research.

The film is set in Berlin and portrays a day in the life of a young Turkish-German woman called Deniz. From the very beginning, the audience is aware that the protagonist is discontent with aspects of her life and is searching for something. She wanders around the city taking various means of transportation and meeting several people. The film deals with everyday situations, and thereby allows the audience to learn more about Deniz’s search scene by scene. In the course of the film, we learn that she is a voice-over actress; we discover her unhappiness with her boyfriend Jan, which culminates in their break-up, observe the potential blossoming of a new love with Diego, whom she repeatedly runs across on her journey and who flirts with her despite the fact that his girlfriend is to return the next day. We meet Deniz’s mother, who feels obliged to refuse any new relationship with a man due to her sense of responsibility for her late husband as well as her successful sister, who is worried that a baby would interfere with her career. Her odyssey through Berlin on foot and different means of public transportation is interrupted by these meetings. During talks and discussions with several people whom she meets throughout the day, she continually revolves around the topic of love. By talking to people who she is tied to by personal relationships, she attempts to understand her attitudes and feelings. In the meanwhile, we see her trying to land a leading role in a film, interacting with three Turkish boys in her neighbourhood, who come across rather cocky and find themselves surprised when she challenges their behaviour, as well as speaking to a random professor of history who gives her a lecture on the history of love.

In contrast to Arslan's previous Berlin trilogy films, the plot neither emerges from nor highlights cultural motifs. This film tells the story of a young woman who grows up in a reality in which ethnic backgrounds are no longer vital for social relations and individual development. Consequently, Deniz is not portrayed as a stereotypical Turkish migrant in Germany. She could be described as an individual who is defined not only by her two cultural influences but also by these influences in combination with her own life experiences. She is not searching for her cultural identity but for personal enlightenment and happiness. In this sense, she is searching for a home in herself, a home within the foreignness of herself. Throughout the film, it is very clear that Arslan does not want to create a milieu study or portray a stereotypical Turkish woman and issues of intercultural conflicts. The film focuses on the heterogeneity among Turkish people, families, generations, and on the life they have constructed or lifestyles they have chosen between two cultures. Yet, throughout the film, elements of cultural hybridity are ever-present. Thus, *A Fine Day* explores a reality of migrants in Germany from a second-generation migrant's perspective and, at first glance, does not reconstruct the traditional Turkish-German binary.

Thomas Arslan's oeuvre, especially the first two films of his Berlin trilogy (*Brothers and Sisters*, 1997 and *Dealer*, 1999), has been subject to film studies which focused on the often torn identities of the leading characters due to their migrant background (Göktürk, 2000b; Mennel, 2002; Berghahn, 2009, Hake and Mennel, 2012). In contrast to these and many other Turkish-German films, *A Fine Day* does not deal with classic migrant identity constructions. Instead, Arslan illuminates their underlying assumptions and thereby puts them into question. This film is therefore often no longer understood as a representative of the 'cinema of duty' (Malik, 1996) or 'cinema of the affected,' but rather of a 'cinema of hybridity' (Burns, 2007, p.375). At first glance, home is not the focus of this film. Arslan, once again, consciously prevents the use of typical migrant themes in his film, such as labour migration, displacement and lack of social inclusion (Ezli, 2010). He, at several occasions, denied any engagement in identity politics with his films (see Chapter 2). Nevertheless, it must be said that this film, similar to other films of the Berlin School, '...display(s) a distinct interest in specifically German locations, stories, and socio-political circumstances' (Abel, 2007). The lost, old, often far away home – as for example, the father of Erol, Ahmed and Leyla in *Brothers and Sisters* feels – is not central to this

film. The young protagonist remains rootless and longing for belonging. Arslan's recurring affinity with change and transition is ever-present throughout the film.⁷⁸

5.2 Hybrid Homes in *A Fine Day*

The film deals with the search of a young Turkish-German woman for the meaning of love and happiness and with her expectations for life, which implies a quest for belonging and home. Similar to *Brothers and Sisters* and *Dealer*, it uses the topography of the city to emphasise her inner conflict, which she faces with sovereignty and calmness. In contrast to the siblings in *Brothers and Sisters* and Can in *Dealer*, Deniz, however, moves beyond the boundaries of Berlin Kreuzberg. In addition, her walking entails much more determination and takes her to various neighbourhoods of Berlin, while Erol and Can stroll rather aimlessly through the streets of Berlin Kreuzberg. Her constant mobility and use of various different means of transportation, such as tram, S-Bahn, and taxi, suggest a particular restlessness. Anonymous tube stations and busy streets underline the potential of getting lost; morbid houses as well as bland buildings on one hand and peaceful nature on the other hand reflect Deniz's lack of and desire for a place of comfort and belonging. Deniz is torn, yet this does not seem related to her ethnicity and cultural background at first glance, but rather to her feelings and her personal place in this world. According to Schick, *A Fine Day* 'thematizes the loss of stability [...] the continuous search for love of the protagonists, comfort and reliable social ties [...] and no longer problems based on her origin (2011, p.81)⁷⁹. Also, Abel follows this train of thought by suggesting that 'being torn between two cultures' (Abel, 2013, p.45) does not reflect Deniz's life experience. In fact, the director himself noted: 'Principally, I did not want to define what is foreign about Deniz, exotic but rather to treat her as autonomous person' (Arslan quoted in Reinhardt, 2001)⁸⁰. However, I propose that there is evidence that Arslan draws on the characters' experience as second-generation migrants in his exploration of their search for identity, although not necessarily on the basis of

⁷⁸ Abel speaks of a 'habitual representational deployment of change' (Abel, 2012, p.46), and transition provides room for hybridity.

⁷⁹ '[...] thematisieren diesen Verlust an innerer Stabilität [...] der andauernden Suche der Protagonisten nach Liebe, Geborgenheit und verlässlichen sozialen Bindungen' (Schick, 2011, p.81).

⁸⁰ 'Es ging mir in erster Linie nicht darum zu definieren, was fremd an Deniz ist, was exotisch, sondern darum, sie als eine eigenständige Person zu behandeln' (Arslan quoted in Reinhardt, 2001).

reconstructions of monocultural dichotomies that characterised Turkish-German cinema of the 1970s and 1980s (see Chapter 2). In *A Fine Day*, Deniz searches for a reference point, and she needs to position herself with regards to her cultural heritage several times, which I will discuss in the following subchapters. It could be said that she attempts to find her place of belonging, her home, through love and understanding. In this context, it is worth noting that she seems to feel most comfortable and find more understanding in conversations with a young adult of migrant background. The first conversation between Deniz and Diego in the park underlines this sensation. This meeting is portrayed more intimately than the conversations with her mother, her sister, and certainly the ones with Jan which are characterised by disagreement and a lack of mutual understanding. Deniz and Diego, however, appear to get along well with one another instantaneously. In this scene, Arslan suggests a common living experience among people with a migrant background (also reflected by Akin's *Short Sharp Shock*, 1998). This could be understood, at first glance, as a message to join up with people of similar backgrounds, as only they can relate to the challenges of a life between cultures. Thereby, Arslan, indirectly at first, reinforces the exclusionary sensation that similar cultural backgrounds have a connecting effect. Ultimately, this sensation is mitigated. As their relationship progresses, it is clear that despite the intimacy she felt from the beginning, his understanding of love and happiness, and thus, his view on life differs profoundly from hers. He cannot be her anchor of belonging and she has to continue her search.

Aligning with his earlier films and once again demonstrating his nearness to the Berlin School of filmmaking, *A Fine Day*, due to his unconventional use of stylistic devices, his naturalistic use of light and soundtrack, as well as a plot which is told almost casually, demands a rather attentive audience (Schick, 2010, p.149; Neubauer, 2011, p.206). Throughout the film, it is mostly left to the viewer to make sense of Deniz's journey – there is 'no clear-cut problem' or 'specific goal' as conventional filmmaking holds (Schick, 2010, p.149, see 2011). Arslan's episodic, elliptical narrative requires the audience to form an interpretation of the film piece by piece and lets them share the fate of the characters as, as Deleuze calls it, 'seers' (1989, p.xi). In order to understand the message of the film, it has to be analysed in its entirety as a piece of art. Knörer suggests that:

Every single image, every gesture, every cut and every camera movement counts and every single element adds another layer of often ambiguous meaning to what at first sight seem simple plots and constellations (2009).

By emphasising normal activities, such as the use of public transit, doing the laundry at your mom's or giving up on using chopsticks, Arslan elevates every act and points out the uniqueness of each. In doing so, each scene gains the same significance, and no scene is given prominence over the other. In other words, each scene, whether it appears as trivial as waiting for the tube, adds to the meaning of Deniz's search, and therefore, the meaning of the film.

Arslan allows the audience to discover each piece of information and each development in real-time, supposedly objectively, with the protagonist. At the same time, he abstracts the plot by revealing the artificiality of the medium of film. The cinematic elements that fabricate the illusion of realism, such as observing camera, lack of accompanying music, lack of artificial light and the simultaneous artificiality of the dialogues, as well as the minimal use of theatrical means, result in a constant battle between nearness to and distance from the characters. This affects the perception of the visual as well as the atmosphere and creates the illusion of authenticity and realism. The (almost) exclusive use of natural light sources as well as the eschewal of camera cranes add to the impression of reality, yet at the same time reminds one of the film's constructive nature as director and screenwriter Arslan intervenes frequently through the use of particular filmic means. The frequent disruptions in sequences, both in the narrative and the dramatic composition of the film, do not allow the audience to get comfortable. An enduring emotional attachment or identification with the characters is very difficult, if not impossible. The back and forth, near and close, transmits a feeling of being lost, of not belonging. The lack of a constant point of reference for the audience can be compared to Deniz's lack of reference and belonging in her life. The scene in the café with Jan is particularly characterised by this volatility (00:08:12–00:12:29). Arslan violates the classical shot reverse shot twice in this scene. Instead of the expected reverse shot, he deploys a tracking shot, once around Jan's back and once around Deniz's back. These perspective switches serve as an interruption of the dialogue and coincide with the moments when Jan insists that they stop talking about a particular topic. This created caesura makes the conversation artificial and uncomfortable. Arslan's editing in this scene does not allow the audience

to take a look at the surrounding, including the waitress who is the object of their discussion about jealousy. This technique transmits Deniz's discomfort and uncertainty as the spectator is entirely dependent on the dialogue between the two to judge whether the argument between them is justified. This created unrest and to a certain extent helplessness based on the lack of reference transfers Deniz's turmoil onto the audience. In addition, the sympathies of the audience are directed towards Deniz, as Jan's disrespectful and childish behaviour has a rather deterring effect.

With the help of such methods, Arslan breaks open the traditional reading of a film and makes a picture of the scenes rather than taking one (Abel, 2012). He constructs the content of the film and thereby creates a:

system of self-evident facts of sense perception that simultaneously discloses the existence of something in common and the delimitations that define the respective parts and positions with it (Rancière, 2004, p.12).

He reveals his existence consciously, which allows the audience to draw conclusions with regards to his intentions and opinions. The frequent disruptions from scene to scene become apparent not only in the narrative aspects of the film but also in the dramatic composition. Using these stylistic devices, the authenticity and illusion of the portrayed world is broken. The transitions between scenes with different people are often rung in by Deniz walking up or down the stairs, escalators or walking through doors, whether apartment doors and public transit doors. These thresholds or moments of transition create the illusion of constant movement and function as bridges between the different places Deniz visits. They metaphorically reflect the bridges between Deniz's identities and certainly between the two cultures Deniz is constantly crossing. She traverses cultural borders at will and easily as she navigates stairs. Deniz as the cultural hybrid is not limited or restricted by them, even though they are immanent. Bhabha's third space could be created in this very moment of crossing (1994). As proposed before, it is in movement that Deniz, although still searching, seems to be at peace with herself and in her element.

Deniz moves through space and rooms that are characterised by anonymity to the extent of alienation, which emphasises her apparent lostness. The lack of identifying elements suggests a sort of non-concluded arrival process. These non-places reflect and enforce the feeling of non-belonging and Deniz's conflict due to the

loss of her inner stability. Wherever she is and goes, whoever she meets, is not her home. Arslan portrays aspects of home in a rather unconventional way. First of all, there is an obvious lack of typical aspects of home. This pervading, almost caricaturising characteristic explains and underlines Deniz's quest for belonging. Her flat, the traditional safe place, especially in the traditional German concept of *Heimat*, is portrayed as an inhospitable, impersonal, cold, and almost provisional place, scarcely equipped with functional furniture and bare walls. There is almost no personal decoration and the walls are without any pictures that could bring in some kind of cosy, homey feeling. Signs of identity (Leferink, 2006) cannot be found in her flat that precludes any feelings of belonging. It is rather a transitional situation than a safe haven. She returns to her flat several times throughout the day, searching for this place of belonging. However, in these scenes, Arslan's frequent long, motionless establishing shots of the bland, colourless flat, which is lit by natural light only, emphasise the lack of such. Already in *Brothers and Sisters* as well as *Dealer* the flats, in which the protagonists resided, did not provide a place of belonging. In *A Fine Day* Arslan goes a step further by portraying Deniz's flat as an empty, inhospitable place.

Also, Jan's and her mother's flats do not exude a feeling of home. They are located in old buildings with heavy doors and creaking stairs while Deniz's flat is in a new building. This suggests their difference in dealing with their lives, while Jan and Deniz's mother – who symbolise tradition and habituation, a supposedly undesirable way of living – compromise and surrender to their situation, Deniz embarks on her search. While Jan continues to cling on a relationship that is clearly over, mainly out of habit, her Turkish mother adheres to values that are considered to be connected to Turkish culture. They do not long for something more which makes her unable to dwell at their places or with them – even here, she does not seem to find peace. This leaves Deniz to search elsewhere. The fact that Arslan set his film in a summer setting stands in contrast to the hopelessness of the *inside* places that reflect a much more immanent feeling of transition. The summer setting creates the feeling that there is a way to escape from the sadness. And yet, the outside scenes – scenes of physical movement in places of apparent transition, such as tube stations – are nevertheless portrayed as somewhat empty and the locations as places of stagnancy that are enforced by the still camera. In contrast, the showcasing of the natural landscape in the summery park, and particularly the forest, evokes feelings of the stereotypical German *Heimat* by which the characters again do not seem affected.

The dominant natural background noise, including street noise, other peoples' voices, and the sounds of the city, does not allow much room for an artificial soundtrack. Compared to the other Berlin trilogy films, Arslan's use of soundtrack in *A Fine Day* is even more restricted and more focussed with regards to the narrative. It reinforces the feeling of authenticity of the film, but at the same time mirrors once again a certain lack of comfort and adds to the restlessness invoked. This intention is supported by Löser who speaks of 'the existence of a space for events (Ereignisraum) also apart from the scenic arrangements' (Löser, 2004, p.139)⁸¹. Through the inclusion of such outside, distracting, and at times almost irritating racket, Arslan achieves an acoustic placing within an urban landscape which allows him or requires him to almost completely refrain from the use of overly invasive, illustrative music. This method again emphasises the illusion of authenticity. Music is used during the opening and closing credits. The only scene in the film accompanied by music is the scene that follows Deniz's break-up with Jan (00:16:58–00:17:30). She walks alone through the forest while the diegetic music creates the feeling of sadness and loneliness. Arslan uses similar nature shots in *Brothers and Sisters*, *Dealer* and *Vacation*, which in each film signify a contrast to the inner turmoil of the protagonists. The use of soundtrack in this scene somewhat disconnects it from the rest of the film. It marks, however, a certain turning point for Deniz. Arslan singles out this scene, which only lasts 32 seconds and one shot, by the use of various filmic means. The scene is somewhat ringed in by the sound of an S-Bahn, which seems to induce Deniz to leave the lake after a long shot of silent thinking. It appears as if the sound of the means of transportation reminds her of her search and prevents her from rethinking her decision. This almost exaggerated street sound as a reminder of her search recurs in moments of hesitation before she enters her mother's apartment and before she meets Diego a second time. In these scenes, it marks her decision and makes her walk towards it with determination. For the forest scene itself, Arslan chose to use a long shot, allowing the audience to see the surroundings, the beautiful, peaceful forest on a summery day and thereby creating a break or rather, an obvious transition between the scenes before and after. In the combination of the pleasant scenery of a natural forest, of a monophonic melody, and of camera panning which allows Deniz to walk from one end of the image to the other, this moment of transition for Deniz gains something peaceful, yet

⁸¹ ... 'auf die Existenz eines Ereignisraums auch außerhalb der szenischen Arrangements.' (Löser, 2004, p.139)

melancholic. Even though Arslan uses the same cinematography as in other walking scenes in combination with the music, the audience is made aware of a moment of actual transition. Deniz has freed herself from Jan as he could not give her the place of meaning and belonging she had been seeking. The jealousy and defiance episodes she had experienced earlier were only symptoms to her decision that Jan can neither provide her with love and understanding nor function as a point of reference to which she could cling. It appears as if Deniz is walking away from a place that she had mistaken as home (Jan's comment of 'Let's go to the lake'⁸² and their straight walk to it underlines that this place by the lake had significance in their lives before) towards an uncertain, but potentially better place.

Despite Deniz's obvious affection for her mother and her sister, which the scenes with them and her intimate way of speaking with them reveal, there is an almost inexplicable distance between Deniz and the members of her family. She seems to not belong to them. Thus, the traditional *hatchery* of home does not give Deniz the needed point of reference and feeling of belonging. During her conversation with Leyla, Deniz romanticises her childhood memories and her connected illusions of love and understanding which suggests that in the past she had been connected to a sort of home. This *lieu de mémoire* (Nora, 1996) is a place that exists through the shared memory of Deniz and Leyla but that no longer fills the spot of home for Deniz. Certainly, Arslan has no interest in 'excavating the past' (Herrman, 2012, p.160). He strictly ties his film to the present and refrains from using cinematic tools, such as flashbacks or a narrator. However, he reveals elements from Deniz's past through conversations, mimic, and gestures. The film utilises the narrative device of ellipses frequently in cases of unnecessary actions, such as leaving the dubbing studio (Hickethier, 2001, p.135; Mikos, 2008, p.137). The periods of elapsed time help shorten the film to 74 minutes and are not necessary for understanding the film's meaning. The audience fills the gaps based on narrative logic. The selection of the moments of such ellipses, however, or rather of when he chooses not to use elliptical narration is significant. For example, the travelling scenes just before Deniz finally gets to speak to Diego are in real-time without any ellipses as these are decisive stages of her journey. The less critical act of leaving the dubbing studio, on the other hand, has been emitted. Here, the filmmaker's influence steps into the foreground.

⁸² 'Lass uns zum See gehen'.

Home, with all of its expressions or concealments (it is never mentioned specifically) in *A Fine Day*, may be the cause of Deniz's turmoil and her search and may be the solution to both. In the film, the aspects of home outlined in Chapter 1 are portrayed on the opposite ends of a polarity – new, empty flat versus old flat overloaded with life's souvenirs, summery outside versus cold, *wintery* inside, nature versus means of transportation, and traditions versus modern lifestyles. Deniz's search, her travelling, connects these dichotomies. Her search highlights her attempt to find or create the hybrid home in which she could live. The constant fluidity, movement and change in *A Fine Day* challenge the 'spatialized interiority' of the traditional concept of home (Kugele, 2012, p.160). Even though she travels through spaces that are marked by anonymity and alienation, such as her blank apartment, the seemingly forgotten tube stations, and vacant stairways, these movements through space are yet filled with emotional sensations of the audience defined by experience, which makes them not empty but enlivened (Assmann, 2011, p.38; Kugele, referencing Lefebvre, 2012, p.163). Transitional spaces are portrayed as thresholds which have not existed up until the moment of crossing them. This could be seen as Bhabha's third space (1994). To Deniz, however, these places of transition – this third space – do not appear as desirable places. The anonymity of these transitional places to the extent of alienation underlines her discomfort, which allows the conclusion that this third space is not her place of belonging, her home, after all.

In Arslan's film, visual and aural elements let places and spaces speak for themselves. Both geographic and social spaces must be understood as 'symbolic signifiers for the characters' emotional states' (Herrmann, 2012, p.164). Though often not aligned with conventional thought patterns, these places symbolise the binaries of the contradictions between strange and familiar, cold and warm, emptiness and life. It can be said that the film weakens the conflict between the *uncanny* and the familiar, or in other words, the dichotomy of *Fremde* (the strange) and *Heimat*. In fact, the spatial aesthetics in combination with the protagonist's visually and aurally evoked interiority of *A Fine Day* prove the potential of the coexistence of these apparent contradictions.

5.2.1 Deniz – a Character in-between Spaces

The lynchpin of *A Fine Day* is Deniz the protagonist, and the central theme of the film is one day in her life and her search for love and understanding. From the very beginning of the film, it becomes clear that this is her story and that the other characters only play a subordinate role. She is a young woman of Turkish background who is portrayed as a self-confident, pertinacious, yet rather reserved and quiet individual. Despite her frigidity on the surface, throughout the film, she reveals a very complex and reflective emotional interior. Even her looks underline these character traits – her stern haircut and rather bland style of clothing contrast with her vulnerable, trusting eyes and fragile figure. Her Turkish background seems to be of little relevance to her life although she seems to naturally and without hassle respect her mother's culture. However, despite Arslan's harsh denial of any kind of cultural turmoil in Deniz (see above), the character certainly reveals a particular resentment with regards to cultural stereotypes, and thereby, exposes that she is, in fact, affected by the same. She obviously rejects her mother's traditional thinking regarding the role of a woman in a relationship, which ultimately leads to a perceived resentment towards her recently deceased father. Nevertheless, she serves her mother tea in accordance with Turkish traditions. Also, the scene with the three Turkish boys shows her natural way of moving in between cultures without reducing herself entirely to one or the other. The mixing of her cultures takes place almost invisibly. Arslan explains the cultural positioning of Deniz:

The figure of Deniz certainly stands for experiences of many of her age [...] The frequently invoked inner conflict between two cultures does not correspond with her life experiences⁸³ (Arslan quoted in Seidel, 2001).

She elegantly, yet restlessly transitions between her two cultures; moreover, she still demarcates the two, which indicates that she is not completely free from her ethnic background. The conflict may not be as obvious as in the case of forced marriage or religious worldviews, but it manifests itself in the loss of traditional points

⁸³ 'Die Figur Deniz steht sicher für die Erfahrungen von vielen ihres Alters.[...] Die vielbeschworene Zerrissenheit zwischen zwei Kulturen entspricht nicht ihren Lebenserfahrungen' (Arslan in Seidel, 2001).

of identification and anchors. Deniz seems to be lost but pretends, perhaps even subconsciously, to exude self-confidence. The image of the desirable culturally hybrid individual as suggested by Bhabha (1994, and see Chapter 1), who combines the best of both worlds, is tarnished by observing Deniz. Despite her apparently complete integration into German culture, she is confused regarding her place and understanding of the fundamentals in her life. This does not make her an unfinished person but rather a searching individual, which the film translates into an actual physical search. Nevertheless, this is not a traditional coming-of-age story in which the protagonist is often going through an emotional period of transition for the first time. Rather, it is clear that Deniz, despite being in transition as well, has been working on these questions for quite some time and the film is only a snapshot of one day in her life. Her self-confident demeanour (despite some cracks as noticeable for example in the scene when she discusses love with a professor of history) and her search are indicative of this. More than Leyla in *Brothers and Sisters*, her self-confidence distinguishes her from the female characters of earlier Turkish-German films. She is worlds apart from the insecure, overwhelmed Turna in *40 Square Meters of Germany* (1985). In fact, Deniz can be understood as a more mature version of Erol's and Ahmed's sister Leyla without the retrictions due to young age which is enforced by Arslan through the same actress Serpil Turhan in the roles of Leyla and Deniz.

The last scene of the film (01:07:39-01:08:10) underlines the continuation of her search, which stands in contrast to the one-time transition of coming-of-age stories. This scene takes place once again in a means of public transportation and shows Deniz looking at a handsome man once and another time, longer, which suggests that her search is indeed not over yet. Similar to *Brothers and Sisters* and *Dealer*, Arslan does not provide the audience with a conclusive ending. The final scene transmits the hope for a happy ending rather than offering an actual happy ending that resolves Deniz's search. This leaves the audience with the hope that she might discover her home within her search. Compared to Turkish-German films of the time, the character of Deniz clearly stands out of the crowd because of its active, self-conscious and reflective continuing search for love, and essentially, her identity. In comparison, Yasemin in Hark Bohm's film of the same name and Leyla in Arslan's *Brothers and Sisters* are much more reactive and led by emotions and presumed cultural expectations, which is much more in line with traditional gender images.

Thomas Arslan picked a day of Deniz's life that may not be a typical, normal day. However, she can be described as an average young woman who does not frequently experience curious, exciting adventures. Here again, Arslan's tendency towards 'counter cinema' (Schick, 2010, p.146; Abel, 2008, 2012, 2013), which resists the demand of a mainstream audience for classical suspense structures with frequent climaxes, reveals itself. At first sight, Deniz seems to be rather ordinary without much colour or sparkle. By observing her, the attentive audience learns to see her depth and experience her metamorphosis. Through the entirety of various narrative, compositional, and theatrical elements, the audience tends to be driven towards Deniz and identifies with her while at the same time remaining alienated from her. The latter is created by the stylistic elements Arslan uses in his film. In the tradition of the Berlin School, the dialogue and acting styles reflect a certain austerity and a lack of emotions. The cinematography and props add to this sensation of 'aesthetic of reduction' (Suchsland, 2005). The character of Deniz does not win over the audience naturally. The mood created by her introduction at the beginning of the film predetermines the mood of the entire film. Arslan uses the same opening window shot as in *Brothers and Sisters* and *Dealer*, yet here, the audience no longer sees the window frame but only a blue sky with some clouds, implying a development from Ahmed's blinds and Can's grey high-rises. In comparison, this opening scene promises more freedom from confinement to the protagonist, which is proven as the film progresses.

The next scene features a thoughtful Deniz who looks melancholically at her sleeping boyfriend and begins her journey alone. Her sometimes monotonous, almost artificial intonation, gives the impression of her jumping out of her character and voicing the opinion of the filmmaker. Like her creator, Deniz reacts in a rather irritated, if not aggressive, manner towards stereotyping and stigmatising based on Turkish backgrounds. The scene with the three Turkish boys pinpoints this behaviour. It is clear that her story is told and that she should be the point of reference. However, due to her apparent lack of emotional reactions and her very staccato, artificial, almost recitative way of speaking and mechanical way of acting, it may be more difficult for the audience to identify with her. Despite the fact that the audience follows a day in her life and learns about her inner turmoil regarding love and happiness, the character's artificiality and detachment disconcerts and creates the feeling of intruding, of spying on her life rather than *living* or experiencing her story. Again, this reveals the filmmaker's existence and his intentional intervention in the plot. Furthermore, it

exaggerates the character's feeling of being lost as the audience is lost and cannot sympathise with her, which makes her search for belongingness even more significant.

In order to stress this constant switch, which reflects a lack of stability in identity construction and a high degree of alienation, the actress Serpil Turhan presents Deniz as a cold, distanced person. Serpil Turhan was also cast for the first film of Arslan's Berlin trilogy *Brothers and Sisters*. Several critics have savaged Turhan's way of acting. Fizel, a writer of *Die Welt* and Galle, a writer of *Die Zeit*, have harshly criticised her wooden, almost absent way of depicting Deniz. Fizel suggests:

But the actress Serpil Turhan plays only an actress, who plays an actress – in real life she would have been kicked out of the studio. She recites her text as if learned by heart – as the other actors as well⁸⁴ (Fizel, 2001).

Birgit Galle even goes as far as writing that Deniz is, 'A thesis by Arslan, poorly played by Serpil Turhan' (quoted in Schick, 2011, p.89). This criticism is exaggerated. It has to be admitted that Turhan's acting at times estranges the viewer. However, given Arslan's obvious admiration for the French cinema of Bresson and Rohmer, her portrayal of Deniz must be understood as direct stage directions from Arslan. Worthmann even compares Serpil Turhan with a Bresson character (Worthmann, 2001). Arslan creates a particular interstice between nearness and distance to the character of Deniz, thereby achieving a status of alternating between co-living the events of the film and purely observing them. Thus, the intentionally bland, almost emotionless acting of Turhan underlines once again the feeling of being torn, lost, without a true place of belonging.

Throughout the film, the camera behaves like a passive observer, remaining static, observing the events. This feeling becomes explicit when the characters move through the room and change the perspective by their movement while the camera remains on the same spot. The camera also provokes a particular nearness, at points even identification with the protagonist Deniz. Close-ups and point-of-view shots allow the development of a second, underlying filmic world that feeds from the unsaid and from the looks as well as the movements of Deniz. This world provides the

⁸⁴ 'Aber die Darstellerin Serpil Turhan spielt nur eine Schauspielerin, die eine Schauspielerin spielt - im wirklichen Leben flöge sie aus dem Studio. Wie auswendig gelernt sagt sie, wie auch alle anderen Darsteller, ihre Sätze auf. (Fizel, 2001)

audience with a deeper understanding of Deniz's world of thoughts than the dialogues of the film do. As important as the places that are shown is the way the camera catches these places. The observing camera concentrates on Deniz and lets the surrounding places appear almost sterile. Through the techniques listed above, the camera is put in a position of identificatory nearness to Deniz. Despite its apparent claim to reality, the camera does not remain unhidden and scrutinises its objectivity. Again, this reveals the filmmaker Arslan behind each scene.

Deniz moves across Berlin, along different understandings of love, rests with different people, and is the character whose point of view the audience observes. Despite the apparent unspectacular, almost monotone plot, she constantly being on the move reflects her restless search and her inner turmoil. Compared to Erol and Can, the streets of Berlin are not hostile to Deniz. They rather support her search. Ultimately, the seemingly endless numbers of streets she walks up and down refer to her undefined and unfinished search for belonging. She is not able to truly articulate the reasons for her search, and only through what could be called trial and error, by learning what she rejects, are her intentions and wishes able to shine through. As opposed to Deniz's apparent self-confidence, her restlessness transmits the feeling of loneliness, even helplessness. This is fostered by external elements rather than internal conflicts (see also Schick, 2012, p.148). Here, critics of the model of cultural hybridity may see the socially excluding aspect of cultural hybridity due to the lack of belonging (see for example Friedmann, 1997, p.88). Deniz appears to be trapped between different identities, but at the same time, switches with ease from one to another. Perhaps, as Ezli suggests, she is a person who has got many identities with many roots (Ezli, 2010, p.62). The fact that Deniz works as a voice-over actress concurs with this claim and takes on a metaphorical meaning in this film and the choice of this kind of job for Deniz is certainly not random. To an extent, Deniz makes foreignness more familiar by dubbing films to the mother tongue of the audience and thereby overcoming certain cultural barriers by creating a third space in between cultures. Yet, through any translation, there are 'inevitable alterations' (Abel, 2013, p.51). Arslan thereby not only challenges the realistic style of his film but also questions cultural categorisations once again, which are, in essence, translations from the respective culture itself (see Bhabha, 1994). In addition, the particular film she is dubbing was not chosen by chance. Arslan proves his admiration for French auteur cinema by letting Deniz synchronise Rohmer's film *Conte d'été*. Moreover, Rohmer's film tells the story of a

man between two women and thematises the question of decisiveness with regard to love. This is certainly a reflection of Deniz's situation, while, at the same time, it causes Deniz to reflect on her situation, and may, ultimately, support her decision to break up with her boyfriend.

The relationship with her boyfriend Jan no longer fulfils her, which marks the beginning of her journey to happiness and true love. She seems to naturally move unobstructed by cultural boundaries. The audience can only recognise the existence of such a trait due to the opposite characters in particular scenes. She represents the fusion between Turkish and German cultures. As such, she shares traits with Germans and Turks who reject common offers for identification. She is not really the *other* but the new *self* and searching for meaning, understanding, love, and happiness. The cultural hybridity is, despite her style of living, implied by her very precise use of language and the naturalness she displays while having a conversation with her mother in which she is speaking in accent- and jargon-free German while her mother exclusively uses Turkish. Thomas Arslan describes the role of Deniz in the following way:

She passes through her 'neighbourhood' with such naturalness. She is a person with her own secrets, contradictions, and particularities who cannot be reduced to her background⁸⁵ (quoted in Seidel, 2001).

Her entire presence, including her proud, upright walk and her unrushed way of speaking fills the screen, especially in the casting scene. However, the people she meets on her journey, the reminders of cultural differences, influence her quest for answers. Despite the fact that she cannot affiliate herself completely with one or another point of view, all these encounters reflect the inner battle Deniz is still fighting. Still, the conversations throughout the film lead her towards a new space, which takes on certain characteristics and rejects others of the people in her life.

Deniz's clothing reflects her capability of blending or perhaps even camouflaging. While her sister, the rational Leyla, wears an elegant business suit with sneakers which portrays her as the independent working woman, Deniz's clothing style is unflashy and almost boyish. It is clear that she does not define herself through her

⁸⁵ 'Sie bewegt sich mit Selbstverständlichkeit durch die Umgebung, in der sie lebt. Sie ist eine Person mit eigenen Geheimnissen, Widersprüchen und Besonderheiten, die sich nicht auf ihre Herkunft reduzieren lassen.' (Seidel, 2001).

way of dressing. She changes her clothes three times during the day. This may be her way of freeing herself from the events before. Surprisingly, this fact and its significance to the film have not yet been acknowledged by the analyses of *A Fine Day*. By changing her clothes, however, she also slips into her different roles. In this sense, the clothing functions as external signifier of the transition between her worlds. She gets changed for the first time after leaving Jan's apartment and prior to going to work at the studio. The second clothing change takes place after she breaks up with Jan and before she visits her mother. The final time appears at the end of the film after she says her final goodbyes to Jan and before she walks off to the café where she will be having a random conversation with a university professor and after the unsatisfying scenes with first Diego and then Jan. These are all situations of transition between her different worlds: her life as a fully integrated, working woman, her ties with her mother's culture, and her continuing search. They each take place after an encounter with Jan. The act of changing clothes is thereby connected to a moment of catharsis, of a washing-away of the prior occurrences and a metaphorical switch between identities. It manifests the ease with which Deniz' moves between multiple identity options, yet at the same time, underlines her restlessness, her inability to truly belong to just one option, the absence of a home.

More so than in the previous Berlin trilogy films, travelling is a recurring theme in *A Fine Day*. Arslan adds meaning to the travelling by saying, 'I like to show how someone travels from one location to another. The path is not dead time'⁸⁶ (Arslan quoted in Seidel, 2001). The essence of travelling entails departure as well as arrival. The latter, however, does not seem possible for Deniz. Thus, the question of belonging, although not explicitly worded, is ever-present in the film, and belonging is closely tied to the concept of home (see Chapter 1). *A Fine Day* does not have a classical separation into different acts. Instead, it strings together the different stops of Deniz's journey to find the meaning of love and happiness in an elliptical narrative. These stops, which are either marked by interaction with other people or alone-time or rather *preparation* time in her flat, are tied together by travel scenes. The paradox of Deniz traveling across Berlin during the entire film and then revealing to Diego that she dislikes travelling because she does not feel comfortable in unfamiliar places and she would miss her friends – shows her inner conflict. On the one hand, she is looking for

⁸⁶ 'Mir gefällt es zu zeigen, wie sich jemand von einem Ort zum anderen bewegt. Die Wege sind keine tote Zeit.' (Arslan quoted in Seidel, 2001)

something stable, for the familiar, but at the same time, she is searching for love, reflecting her inner turmoil. When she is *resting* and talking with the people whom she is closest to, even with the unfamiliar professor at the café, more questions arise than answers. Her mobility may not give her the answers, yet while she is moving, she seems to be most self-confident, which is enforced by a determined walk and Arslan's almost promising cinematography. In each walking scene, the camera waits for her to approach, followed by a camera pan to track her movement, and finally lets her proceed walking, while remaining static. At the same time, the entirety of elements that let Deniz embark on her journey and from which the plot is derived is not known and can only be assumed by the audience. Thereby, Arslan creates a feeling of hopeful wonder with regard to her destination.

The theme of travelling in *A Fine Day* can be connected to the ease with which Deniz moves between the world of her origin and her life as an integrated German. Deniz travels by train, subway, tram, bus, taxi and also by foot through the city. She waits at platforms and cuts across parks. She always has a particular destination but still seems to be sauntering. Almost one-third of the film takes place in various different modes of public transportation which are not places of transition but rather means of transition. Her search pushes Deniz through Berlin and Arslan's camera gives her freedom to move. Most of the time, she travels without any luggage. She is unobstructed and can freely absorb her surroundings. Nothing seems to distract her from her search. This can also be transferred to the so-called cultural baggage which is often used in reference to restricting or predefining traditional cultural elements. In other words, Arslan lets Deniz travel with apparently no cultural elements that could hinder or decelerate her on her search or – seen from another perspective – help her find a better place in the sense of cultural aspects providing a certain sense of direction for her search for belonging.

The goal of the constant travels of Deniz, which is neither equivalent to an escape nor for the reason of pure movement, is not arrival. Here, Arslan's affinity to places of transition comes into play again. The sequences of travelling portray first steps in another direction regarding her search. They are the moments when Deniz is alone with her thoughts, when she can digest the previous encounters and develop her own theories about love and belonging. Generally, they are preceded by scenes with conversations or meetings which helped her understand the places that did not represent places of belonging and understanding. The scene on the S-Bahn after her

break-up with Jan and her transitional forest walk is exemplary of this (00:17:30–00:18:02). Here, Arslan only uses one single shot of Deniz which lasts for more than 30 seconds. This long close-up shot of Deniz without any camera movement, along with the natural lighting and her thoughtful face, makes her thinking process almost tangible. No conversations are to be heard; only the sound of the S-Bahn is almost irritatingly loud. Arslan thereby achieves a certain authenticity in the scene and creates the urgent desire of the audience to learn about her thoughts which will remain unsatisfied.

Krystian Woznicki called Deniz a ‘post-ethnic character’ (2011). According to Smith, ethnic is ‘a named human community connected to a homeland and having common myths of ancestry, shared memories, one or more elements of shared culture, and a measure of solidarity’ (Smith, 2001, p.13). Deniz certainly represents a Turkish-German who deviates from classical migrant descriptions and reflects hybridity, but at the same time, her ethnic and cultural background does influence her life and more implicitly her search.

Throughout the film, it becomes clear that Deniz is an individual beyond cultural barriers who is still influenced by different cultures. She does, in fact, come close to Bhabha’s understanding of a cultural hybrid. In the words of Nikos Papastergiadis, Deniz is a ‘bridging person [...], both the benefactor of a cultural surplus and the embodiment of a new synthesis’ (2000, p.15). However, her cultural hybridity is described less euphemistically than Bhabha’s and Papastergiadis’s cultural hybridity and is tied to her desire to find a place of belonging and love. Nevertheless, her cultural hybridity does not define her entirely as a person; it is rather an addition which makes her more empathic, and to a certain extent, more open to her search.

5.2.2 Diego and the Potential of Hybridity

Deniz’s encounters of her day symbolise different steps in her search for her place of belonging. Jan is the final straw, not the initiator but the catalyst for her search. He helps her realise that she was going the wrong way. Diego, on the other hand, stands for fateful, romantic love. It is not clear whether the encounters with him are purely by chance or initiated by one or the other. The beginning of a new love seems to linger around the corner. However, he cannot give her the anchor she needs either, which is articulated by a scene towards the end of the film portraying the late night conversation

between Diego and Deniz by the river (00:55:16–00:57:41). Contrasting the other outside scenes, this one is lit by artificial light. Both have paper coffee cups in their hands, indicating the length of their conversation. Arslan's stable, medium close-up of this scene allows the spectator to closely observe gestures and the emotions of the characters, which is particularly important in the case of Deniz, as she shows her emotions in a subtle, hidden way. In this scene, Diego reveals that he has a girlfriend, almost incidentally. Deniz's instant reaction of averting her gaze and looking across the river to some distance discloses disappointment. It also marks a turning point in their conversation introducing a new distance, even discomfort between the two. Although she admits that talking to Diego is good for her, reflecting the mutual understanding of people with similar background suggested earlier in this chapter, their looming parting and disconnection due to the absent intruder (Diego's girlfriend) is immanent. This may be the very moment when Deniz understands that she has to return to her search.

The character of Diego is a rather mysterious, somewhat shady one. Seemingly by chance – and this mystery is not resolved during the film – he encounters Deniz on several occasions throughout the day. It is not clear whether these meetings are accidental, let alone fateful or initiated by Diego. As opposed to the other supporting characters, he accompanies Deniz throughout the entire film. He not only appears at her *stops* but also travels with her. This might be seen as a metaphor reflecting similarities in the path of the two second-generation migrants. With their first conversation, Diego suddenly becomes real and steps out of the shadow of apparent stalking. He was born in Portugal and speaks about it as home. Nevertheless, he is fully integrated into German culture. His parents have moved back to their old home in Portugal and he visits Portugal at least twice a year. He likes Berlin in the summer but cannot get used to its winters. He does not seem to be the loser, as for example, Erol and Can are portrayed, nor does he reflect the image of a victim of earlier Turkish-German films. Nevertheless, he portrays a person who deals with the two cultural heritages differently, as he, as much as the audience understands, is not torn between the two worlds of his upbringing. The truth is, he is still torn – not necessarily in a bad way – between the two worlds of his homes, yet he takes the best of both worlds. Thereby, he certainly is more the hybrid Bhabha had in mind. Similar to Deniz, he appears to be rather successful in his job as the music manager of a radio station. He lives in the same neighbourhood as Deniz which appears to be a middleclass living

quarter of Berlin. This again underlines Arslan's different view on Turkish-Germans as opposed to satisfying stereotypes.

Diego is a quiet, average-looking man who would not attract much attention. His character is bland and lacks real colour. His voice sounds almost boyish. However, he does attract Deniz's attention and not just due to his omnipresence around her. There is a strong connection between Deniz and Diego. It seems as if the audience witnesses the beginning of a new love. In addition to the very intimate conversations they have from the very beginning of their first meeting, this impression gets backed up through Deniz's infatuated description of Diego when talking to her sister. She tells her that 'it feels as if we have known each other forever'⁸⁷. This intimacy is particularly noticeable in the scene at the park by the railing to the lake (00:42:52–00:44:10). They had just met finally for real and jumped into a very personal conversation right away. Again, this scene is spacious through the calm, single shot filming and the minimal use of cinematic devices. Through the medium shot, the audience can follow the conversation between the two and get an impression of the direct environment at the same time. The scenery of a beautiful, peaceful park creates a feeling of comfort and stands in contrast to the busy, anonymous scenes on the road. The camera is held still on both characters; only natural light is used, and only nature sounds can be heard, which increases the sensation of calmness and peacefulness. Here, Deniz gains rare sympathies as she shows emotions and more naturalness. She even makes a little joke that opposes the serious, unemotional personality that we have met before. While she stays in one spot, Diego moves around a bit. It appears as if he tries to get closer to her. They discover that they have similar backgrounds through their names. Both have parents who were born in another country. However, Diego seems to be more at peace with his life than Deniz. They speak about the weather, about Portugal and about travelling. Paradoxically, Deniz dislikes travelling as she misses her friends too soon. However, we never meet her friends. She never even mentions them again. They seem to not play a decisive role in her search for belonging. On the other hand, Berlin, the place she knows, seems essential for her to go on her journey. The romantic impression, however, ends abruptly when he, after meeting again and spending the entire night talking to Deniz without any form of physical approach, mentions almost casually that his girlfriend will be returning to Berlin from a one-year study trip.

⁸⁷ 'Es fühlt sich an, als kennen wir uns schon immer.'

During the search for happiness and the meaning of love, Diego portrays romantic and fateful love. He appears to be the kind of love Deniz is looking for – passionate love, which was somehow initiated by destiny. Diego intrigues Deniz. He apparently satisfies her desire for romantic love for which she broke up with Jan and which she defends throughout the film. He could have been the anchor of belonging – Deniz's home. But in the end, he cannot or does not want to fulfil this spot as he may have found his place of belonging and home already, potentially in another woman.

5.2.3 Meeting the Stereotypical Other

During her encounters with various people, Deniz is confronted with traditionalism, differing understandings of gender roles and, questions of modern female self-confidence and social structures. In order to highlight and contrast Deniz's cultural hybridity, Arslan, as in *Brothers and Sisters* as well as *Dealer*, chose to portray certain stereotypes of Turkish migrants in Germany. *A Fine Day* is a melodrama – even though Thomas Arslan would probably object to such a categorisation (Nierlin, 2012) – which sends the protagonist Deniz on an incomplete journey to seek the meaning of love and happiness, a journey which extends beyond the duration of the film. On a connotative level, the content of this film develops from a cultural aspect and more evidently from a young person's ever-present question about her place in this world. While Deniz's cultural background does not play a dominant role in her behaviour, her harsh rejection of the behaviour of the three Turkish boys or the traditional understanding of love of her mother indicates that her cultural background has left traces which deserve to be further explored. The portrayal of Deniz as a strong, integrated woman whose ethnic background plays only a marginal role in her life as well as the image of the strong sisters Deniz and Leyla contrast with the somewhat weak men (especially Jan, but also Diego, who comes across as a more delicate creature) and serve to counteract the learned stereotypical values of Turkish culture. Thereby, Arslan almost caricatures the expectations of the audience with regards to Turkish culture and draws attention to the cultural impact of such stereotyping. The two men in her life (on that day) are not the only encounters Deniz has on this day. Meeting the three Turkish boys is significant, as only through the encounter with them does the audience get an idea about Deniz's Turkish background, which is reinforced during the scene with her mother. The boys stand for the values of machismo and

chauvinism which is, in popular understanding, cobbled with stereotypes, often connected to Turkish culture. This scene reveals that Deniz rejects and clearly demarcates herself from such behaviour, not only linguistically. There seems to be no room for cultural nostalgia or inner disunity based on cultural particularities. Her mother symbolises responsible, habitual love – the kind of love Deniz does not want to have. As such, she portrays an undesired, old convention from which Deniz tries to escape. The rationalism of her *modern* sister Leyla almost stops Deniz from continuing her journey and meeting up with Diego. At the same time, Deniz's idealism most likely helped Leyla to make the decision of keeping her baby.

Even though Arslan suggests that he shows a new form of an independent migrant who is no longer purely characterised by the conflict between two cultures, he paradoxically cannot free himself entirely from cultural stereotyping in order to portray such a culturally hybrid person (see above). His exaggerated portrayal of the three Turkish boys who represent the typical stereotype of a Turkish macho underlines this (00:18:24–00:19:26). During her journey, Deniz bumps into three boys who can clearly be identified as boys of Turkish background due to their language, looks, and behaviour. This encounter takes place in her neighbourhood. These three Turkish boys portray the other world, the patriarchal Turkish culture. They use German in a way that is associated with young Turkish-Germans, sometimes called 'Kiezdeutsch' (Wiese, 2012). Here, maybe the first real stereotype with regards to ethnic background of the film is touched. The sound of this ethnolect used to have a predominantly negative reputation as broken German. Nowadays, it has gained recognition with the public and academia. Some scholars have even given 'Kiezdeutsch' the status of a German dialect (see Wiese, 2012; Zaimoglu, 1995). The contrast between Deniz and the three boys in this scene, which is created by the different pronunciations of German, is made explicit to the audience. Deniz and the three boys seem to be worlds apart as she speaks a very pronounced High German. Therefore, this scene distances Deniz from ethnic stereotypes and even from her ethnic background.

The three boys make their entrance with a derogative, immature comment on Deniz in Turkish. When she reacts self-confidently in German, they are somewhat surprised and shy, but immediately knuckle under her and relativise their comments. But, it seems that in order to retain their honour, they continue with their macho behaviour; they are there for protection. When she refuses, one of them simply says,

‘Man, we like it’⁸⁸. Through this comment, he takes away any room for a sustainable need for their behaviour and admits that their behaviour is motivated by habits. Deniz obviously rejects this kind of Turkish machismo. Nevertheless, she accepts the escort to her house by the three. Even though she is clearly far removed from the portrayed Turkish values, she plays along. Throughout the entire film Arslan avoids the portrayal of typical Turkish stereotypes openly, except for this scene with the three boys. Almost suddenly, the audience is reminded that Deniz is indeed of Turkish background herself. Despite the short appearance of the three boys in the film, they play a rather important role for understanding Deniz’s situation. This scene in particular reveals Deniz’s cultural hybridity. By contrasting Deniz with the essentialist identity construct of the three boys, her identity seems rather fluidly constructed. Even though she is obviously not delighted by the behaviour of the boys, she naturally accepts it and plays along, and not necessarily only in order to avoid confrontation. She rather seems to accept their behaviour as a given, which again shows the ease with which she moves across cultures as a culturally hybrid person in a third space.

Deniz’s mother also reminds the audience that Deniz is of a Turkish origin. She converses with her in Turkish throughout the entire scene between the two. The natural act of making tea and her replies in German reveal her cultural background, and at the same time, distance Deniz from her mother’s behaviour. Her mother reflects Turkish traditionalism. Even though her husband is dead, she still fulfils the stereotypical role of a Turkish woman. However, in contrast to the father in *Brothers and Sisters*, she does not escape to a utopian Turkish home; rather, she continues with the life she used to have without glorifying aspects of it. Deniz’s mother, despite constant fighting and unhappiness, never got divorced from her husband because she felt a sense of responsibility. The traditional understanding of marriage as the safe haven that protects not only the married couple but also their offspring stands in contrast with Deniz’s longing for passion, which seems to be as undefined as her search for belonging. Her mother blows away any kind of romantic feelings for the arrival at the end of the search for happiness by saying, ‘Happiness is not something joyful’⁸⁹ (00:27:06).

With regard to Deniz’s search for belonging, her mother symbolises rationalism. She pleads with her daughter not to wait for a great love. To her, love is an act of habituation, something that grows with time rather than an exploding feeling.

⁸⁸ ‘Wir stehen drauf’.

⁸⁹ ‘Glück ist nichts Fröhliches’.

Her marriage was not very happy; however, now that her husband is dead, she feels unprotected and vulnerable. She understands love as respect and responsibility for the other. Deniz does not want this kind of habitual partnership without passion in her life. She even rejects the word ‘partnership’ used by her mother as something too rational. This discussion with her mother proves Deniz’s desire to break with conventions, whether they are culturally influenced or socially dictated.

During the scenes at her mother’s place and with the Turkish boys, the language temporarily switches to Turkish. The spectator who is not capable of understanding the Turkish language is only included through the use of subtitles. Suddenly, the audience finds itself in a situation of exclusion. Even though understanding is given, the difference invokes the feeling of foreignness. However, Arslan reinforces the image of Deniz as a cultural hybrid by letting her reply in German in a natural, effortless way. The scenes with her mother are introduced by the creaking stairs that lead to her mother’s apartment, the ramshackle walls, and the old-fashioned doorbell, which stand in contrast to Deniz’s building and apartment, which are rather modern. This creates a feeling of anticipation for the confrontation with the past and potentially Turkish traditions, given her background. This sensation is increased by Deniz greeting her mother in Turkish and the Turkish response.

After observing Deniz putting her laundry in the modern laundry machine – which almost disappoints the anticipation of more Turkish traditions – the scene where the meeting of the cultures is most tangible takes place between Deniz and her mother in the kitchen (00:23:13–00:27:10). One cultural aspect that can be found on the portion of the iceberg above the surface and that therefore is one of the instantly visible cultural elements is language. In this scene, Deniz replies in German while having a conversation with her mother, who speaks Turkish. This switching of languages, which seems natural to her and her mother, takes some getting used to for the audience. The need for subtitles distinguishes the audience from the characters but at the same time makes the foreign Turkish language understandable, and thereby, more familiar. Perhaps the reason for including scenes in Turkish was to display the ease with which Deniz, but also Erol and Can, can move between the worlds. However, I suggest that the created estrangement, as in comparable scenes in the other two Berlin trilogy films, puts the audience in the position of the stranger or the excluded, reminding them once more of cultural differences.

The scene starts with a medium-shot of Deniz and her mother involved in small talk while Deniz's mother is preparing tea the traditional Turkish way. Other than the exotic looking teapots, the kitchen does not necessarily point out the background of its inhabitants. As soon as the conversation becomes more serious and revolves around the topic of love and belonging, Arslan switches to alternating close-up shots of the two. The entire kitchen scene lasts three minutes and 57 seconds, making it one of the longer scenes in the film and indicating its significance. The frequent sounds of children's voices in the background increase the feeling of being on a trip to the past of Deniz, her childhood. Talking about the relationship between their parents, sitting in her mother's kitchen, receiving motherly comfort, and being a child again, however, does not give her the answers or the place of belonging she is seeking, and this drives her to continue her search.

A Fine Day cannot be seen as a classical redefining-oneself film. However, the breaking with or loss of traditional social structures results in a sort of identity crisis for the protagonist. Even the old, suffering image of migrants (torn between two worlds) – despite its noticeably demeaning and stereotypical character – may have provided a certain stability:

It is this habitual representational deployment of change – change or difference measured against a prior moment of self-identical identity – that Arslan's films self-reflexively question (Abel, 2012, p.46).

5.3 Home in *A Fine Day*

The concept of home, although it is not openly discussed in Arslan's *A Fine Day*, certainly gains a re-definition in this film. The representation of Deniz as a culturally hybrid individual challenges the traditional understanding of home and its implied spatiality. Deniz's search for love entails a search for belonging. However, wherever she is and goes, she appears like a stranger and resonates with a feeling of distance from her surroundings.

Deniz addresses this loss of inner stability with her search for love, happiness, belonging, and secure social relationships. In this sense, her search is more defined than Erol's in *Brothers and Sisters*, who chooses to escape to an uncertain future in

Turkey, and then Can's in *Dealer*, who cannot decide what he wants and finally ends up in a situation without alternatives. The connecting element throughout the *A Fine Day*, and the one consistency or point of reference, is love, reflected by almost every conversation in the film. However, during these talks, Deniz does not explicitly announce her opinion and her desires. The viewer can rather only understand from the conversations and her implicit behaviour. In fact, it becomes clear what Deniz does not want but she is incapable of expressing her true desires. She constantly searches for an *ideal* image of love, an *ideal* relationship, but the conversations during the film leave her disappointed as they reveal that such an ideal is not possible. Her recurring encounters with Diego and the radiating romance promise the beginning of a new love. The impression of destiny makes this even more desirable to the audience. Despite the somewhat doubtful nature of their meetings, the audience must believe that the two will be romantically linked. This interpretation reaches an abrupt turning point when Diego tells her casually that he has a girlfriend. Interestingly enough, despite her obviously modern, emancipated, and detached nature, Deniz maintains a rather romantic view of love. This becomes clear when she visits her mother, in her conversations with Jan and Diego, her casting, and her talk with the history professor at the café. She searches for unconditional, undivided love which in turn reflects her desire for unconditional belonging, home, stability, and rootedness.

Deniz is portrayed as a fluid character, implying a need for a home with a certain degree of fluidity in order to avoid or reduce alienation processes. With regard to the needs that are satisfied by the home which were identified in Chapter 1, it can be said that clearly, Deniz's survival is ensured while the other needs that represent the significance of home, such as point of reference and roots, cannot be connected to Deniz's portrayed life-world. Nevertheless, they do find expression due to the fact that Deniz is clearly searching for the same. Throughout the film, Deniz does not reveal many close relationships with other people that may create a feeling of home. Her relationship with her mother is filled with respect and honour for her traditions but does not leave the audience with a warm feeling. Even with her sister Leyla and Diego, she seems to be strangely detached from the conversations despite her obvious affection for both. As mentioned before, at first glance, Deniz's cultural background does not appear to affect her life very much. However, it must be clearly seen as one of the starting points of her search. The much-discussed conflict between old and new

culture is rarely thematised in Arslan's film, yet it is transferred into Deniz's interiority.

Deniz's conversation with the university professor about love, with all its artificiality (which again allows Arslan to speak from the off) allows us to draw conclusions with regards to home. The conversation deals with love and its historical development. The professor suggests that historical love was determined by pure survival as it provided a certain kind of safety. With progress came more choices, and romantic love gained in significance. This can be transferred onto the idea of home as discussed in Chapter 1. The search for the meaning of love and belonging is connected to the attempt of an individual to place itself somewhere. Love and its associated rootedness provide a point of reference in the process of identity construction and/or development. Deniz began her journey because she was not content; she was unsatisfied and lost. One of her points of reference was blurred, foggy, or, more appropriately, in the wrong direction. Still, it is important to note that she was not forced to go on her search – she made a conscious decision. Her cultural background does not push her into one or another direction, nor does it hinder her from going anywhere. Rather, it gives flavour, more opinions, more input, more to think about; in essence, it enriches and fulfils the search.

The final question should be whether cultural hybridity, with the potential accompanying loss of stability and fixed identity, allows for the idea of home. The answer to that question offered by *A Fine Day* is ambiguous. At first glance, *A Fine Day* ends somewhat unresolved. However, in a certain way, Deniz's continuing search is the solution to her instability. The end of the film shows that Deniz is still on her search but implies that Deniz has come to peace with her journey. During the day, she had met several people who presented several different life models of a cultural hybrid. Her mother represents the old world and an essentialist view on culture, which is characterised by traditions and archaic structures. Leyla, on the other hand, stands for the new, emancipated world, while Diego combines both worlds by taking the best from the two. Neither way, however, is Deniz's way. It appears that she has found stability in her search or perhaps even a home in it. Whether she finds her answers or not does not seem to be important. In fact, Arslan declares the act of travelling as an act of liberation not only from cultural boundaries but also from other factors that obstruct the search for happiness and belonging. She seems to accept, after all of the day's encounters with family, love, work, and strangers, that her search is her way of

identifying herself. She is true to herself in her search, and therefore, finds a way of belonging in herself. This derives from the process of accepting different aspects of one's identity. In essence, Deniz is a transcultural Turkish-German woman who no longer defines her home through group identity, yet strives for a balance between cultural as well as personal habits and negotiation and renegotiation based on interaction and exchange. *A Fine Day* reveals an individualised home that is based on the bridging of multiple identities.

6. VACATION – THE HEIMAT IDYLL?

6.1 Preliminary Remarks

In contrast to Arslan's Berlin trilogy, his next fiction film *Vacation* (2007) does not reflect the lives of Turkish-Germans but focuses on the lives of a German family. After his well-respected Berlin trilogy, Thomas Arslan somewhat concluded the topic of Turkish-Germans in Germany with his documentary *From a Distance*, which describes a very personal view of Turkey. In *Vacation*, a quiet family drama, he clearly moves away from the Turkish-German living environment, but remains within the topic of longing for home and belonging.

Vacation has received only minimal academic attention and is often only mentioned by name in analyses revolving around Arslan's oeuvre. If at all, it is referred to as an example of the Berlin School of filmmaking (Abel, 2008, 2013; Stiglegger, 2007; Thomas, 2007), disregarding the fact that despite their affiliation with the Berlin School, the films of the individual filmmakers tend to be more different than they have in common, and neglecting the individual experiences and developments as filmmakers influenced by their particular live experiences. As opposed to forcing him into a particular niche cinema, Arslan's cultural background is understood as motivating and constituting force, yet not as theme-giving. Despite the absent portrayal of Turkish-Germans in this film, an analysis of *Vacation* can give valuable insights on aspects of home, the view on it from the perspective of a Turkish-German filmmaker. While *Brothers and Sisters* was still marked by confinement and a predestined life's journey, Arslan deconstructed this restriction throughout the Berlin trilogy with the display of an increasing mobility of the characters. Especially in *A Fine Day*, mobility was inseparably connected to transition and the search for belonging. In *Vacation*, mobility is almost absent, yet the interplay of confinement and transition is ever present. His thematic emancipation from a lost home of the past as a mandatory element of cultural hybridity and his proposals for new forms of belonging during the Berlin trilogy gain a new twist in *Vacation* as he tells the story of a German family in search of belonging. Therefore, I propose that *Vacation*, in fact, marks the conclusion to Arslan's filmic exploration of forms of belonging.

The film describes a seemingly idyllic summer family reunion in the rural area of Uckermark. Four generations of the family gather in the country house, where the mother Anna, her husband Robert, and their 15-year-old son Max live surrounded by

stunning and peaceful nature. Yet, the idyll is quickly destroyed when conflicts interrupt the peaceful façade. Laura, one of the daughters from Anna's first marriage, her husband Paul, and their children spend their summer holidays at the house. Later, Laura's sister Sophie also arrives. Anna's ill mother is hosted in the country house as well; later, she will be brought to a hospital, where she dies. With all of the family members united in the small house, conflicts accumulate and break out, revealing life lies and the farce of the image of a perfect family. This summer turns out to be the family's last summer together at this house, as the grandmother dies, the daughter Laura and her husband separate and Anna and Robert decide to sell the house. Despite the seemingly idyllic reunion of the family at one place, estrangement is the predominant theme of the film. In essence, Arslan narrates the story of a German bourgeois family at the edge of its self-destruction.

At the time of the film's production, this group of themes was popular among the filmmakers of the Berlin School, for example, Christian Petzold's *Ghosts* (2005) or Christoph Hochhäusler's *I Am Guilty* (2005). Arslan's *Vacation* reflects his connection to the Berlin School of filmmaking, but at the same time his very own style, even with regard to his previous films. Besides Arslan's typical minimalistic use of filmic elements, the film follows a strict formal and stylistic concept of non-involved, yet particularly detailed observations without camera movements that could manipulate the spectator by 'grabbing [him/her] by the stacking swivel with images that tell him what he should think now' (Arslan in Gupta, 2005). The audience's understanding of the events of the film is not directed, forcing them to use their own subjective experiences in order to interpret the film. Aligning with his previous films, Arslan focuses on the ordinariness of life, where no subject surmounts another. As opposed to Löser (2004), who suggests that Arslan opposes the predictability of the plot due to his style, he reaches a potentially different perception and predictability in each spectator based on their world of experiences.

The title *Vacation*, similar to the notion of home, entails a predominantly positive connotation. The summer vacation is supposed to be an escape from reality. Everyday life and worries can be left behind. Leaving the city and spending at least some time in an idyll is often the essence of vacation, a temporary home away from home. Yet clearly, in this film, the summer vacation does not reflect relaxation or mental refuelling, but a catalyst for conflict and resulting transitions. Arslan's framing, however, does not allow any escape or potential for opportunities or belonging. The

peacefulness in *Vacation* equals melancholy. What truly stands out in this presumably happy multigenerational family reunion is the lack of the joy of living (Abel, 2013, p.54). The family summer vacation is firmly fixed, especially in Germany's middle-class, as the highlight of the year. The paradox of portraying the summer vacation of the family as a melting pot for family conflicts, lies, and hidden desires deconstructs this idyllic possibility of retreat, and thereby, suggests that searching for belonging by escaping is not an option.

The production of *Vacation* had an uneven start, as the guaranteed financial support from ZDF⁹⁰ was withdrawn on short notice in 2002, which led to the late realisation of the project in 2007 supported by ZDF, 3sat and Pickpocket Filmproduktion (Foerster, 2007). In contrast to his last two films *Dealer* and *A Fine Day*, which focused on one central character, *Vacation* is the story of an entire family. Arslan explains his interest in the portrayal of a family by suggesting that '[i]t gave me the opportunity to establish more threads and go through different facets of family and love stories' (Baute, 2007).

Several researchers suggest that *Vacation* reflects the emancipation of Turkish-German cinema away from a migrant niche (Ezli, 2009; Knörer, 2009; Neubauer, 2011). I certainly agree with the film critic Ekkehard Knörer, who suggests that:

Thomas Arslan has moved from the Turkish-German Berlin-Kreuzberg settings of his first films *Siblings*⁹¹ (1997) and *Dealer* (1999) towards more general explorations of private and familial relations in today's society in *A Fine Day* and *Vacation* (Knörer, 2009).

But his work is still influenced by his cultural background. Even though he refrains from portraying the lives of Turkish-Germans in his film, *Vacation* is characterised by the constant challenge of social categorisations and primordial givens. While his Berlin trilogy broke with restrictions of migrants to their homes and introduced the opportunities of mobility, and thereby, slowly approached the idea of belonging free of cultural categorisation, in *Vacation*, he moves back to the portrayal of a sedentary place of belonging and underlines the illusion surrounding it. The switch from focusing on the search for belonging of Turkish-German young people in his

⁹⁰ Second German Television is a German public-service television broadcaster.

⁹¹ *Brothers and Sisters* is more commonly used as the translation of Arslan's film 'Geschwister'.

Berlin trilogy to the portrayal of a German family without a more recent migrant background on their quest for a home could suggest a treatment of the topic beyond traditional cultural boundaries; yet, as the film progresses, the need for a more differentiated view on *Vacation* gets revealed.

Vacation can be seen as a milieu drama, which hybridises elements of the dominant culture from the perspective of a hyphenated filmmaker, and thereby, creates a new hybridised aesthetic work (Berghahn, 2009). Thus, I agree with Seeßlen, who describes Arslan's oeuvre as 'more than an image of the live between cultures, but the key to a comprehensive alterity' (Seeßlen, 2002)⁹².

Throughout the film, there are numerous moments of pausing, uncertainty, and lack of belonging. However, in essence, these scenes do not reflect the failure of the character, but rather the lingering moment of transition. All the characters in *Vacation* struggle with the internal battle between freedom and responsibility, past and present, which results in a deep feeling of melancholy. With *Vacation*, Arslan explores the search for belonging from the perspective of a bourgeois German family. Thus, as opposed to his Berlin trilogy, he tackles and deconstructs foundations of the German understanding of home, peaceful landscapes, and family.

6.2 Deconstructing the German *Heimat*

Arslan explores spaces of belonging and plays with the semblance of illusion versus reality. The setting is as important as the narrative. Thomas Arslan suggests that '[e]ach character is connected with the space in which he or she – at whichever point in time – is acting' (Arslan quoted in Nierlin, 2009). The accuracy of the observations in Arslan's films is not obstructed by the extensive use of filmic elements or the creation of suspense (Neubauer, 2011, p.279). When taking space seriously, the film inevitably takes on something documentary (Arslan in Nierlin, 2009). Due to the absence of a guiding hand provided by Arslan for the reception of the film, and at the same time, the autonomous and abstract images force the audience to reflect given or habitual attitudes by relying on their own life experiences. Instead of presenting a rounded plot to the audience, Arslan allows each spectator, through the distanced

⁹² 'mehr als ein Bild vom Leben zwischen den Kulturen, sondern de[n] Schlüssel einer umfassenderen Fremdheit' (Seeßlen, 2002)

observance, to understand the sequences with their own experiences, hopes, and longings. The distance between actor and role, which culminates in the character of Leyla in *A Fine Day*, is less pronounced in *Vacation*. Yet, also in *Vacation*, Arslan refrains from providing identification structures. As in his previous films, Arslan is reluctant to use an artificial soundtrack. In fact, only two scenes are marked by background music, otherwise only natural sounds are almost irritatingly overwhelming. The motorbike scene with Max and his girlfriend as well as the scene when Paul goes on a drive after he decided to stay at the house are accompanied by melancholic music. The explicit use of music in these scenes underlines the feeling that there are moments of apparent liberation. For Max, his motorbike ride with his girlfriend could mean a little freedom from the rural seclusion. Paul uses the car ride to liberate himself from his wife (at least for a moment). Also, the two scenes with synthetic soundtrack are used to pull out the audience from the story by revealing the film's mode of production (Foerster, 2007). In addition, in terms of the contrast between stasis and movement, Arslan points out the conflict between 'sedentary and mobile, nomadic lifestyles' (Hermann, 2012, p.170), which is inherent to culturally hybridity.

The first movement of the camera can be observed after almost 20 minutes, when the camera follows Max and his girlfriend on their motorbike (00:19:55–00:22:13). After the meticulous and strict montaging and cutting, the airstream feels like a transition. In fact, after almost 20 minutes of stasis and pure observance, this moving scene interrupts the created atmosphere, which is palpably full of conflict. The mobile camera during the film credits shoots the scene in a rather unusual way. Even then, although the camera moves with the motorbike, it keeps a consistent distance with Max and his girlfriend, as if the camera is attached to the motorbike through a stick and thereby remains static even in movement. The melancholic music, which is the first instance of artificial soundtrack in the film, accompanies Max and his girlfriend during their ride on the motorbike. The score, with the zither and what sounds vaguely like a harmonica, reminds one of the romanticising music used in western films of the 1960s and the 1970s. Arslan thereby creates a sensation of promise and freedom. However, the feeling of relief based on the new absence of jump-cuts and the potential for a more harmonious and continuous story-telling fails to appear, as the unexpected opening credits function as another slide-in. They describe the artificiality and strict

form of the filmmaking, clear that the cinematic elements are closely tied to the storyline.

Included in this motorbike scene, after 20:14 minutes into the film, Arslan displays the opening credits of the film. At this point, the scenes before appear like a prologue, which establishes the potential conflict and basic family constellations of the film, mostly implicitly. The opening scenes reflect Arslan's characteristic filmic techniques particularly, his camera, montage and mise-en-scène. True to his style, Arslan allows the audience to detect hints and make their own conclusions. Almost every scene of the film is set at the premises of Anna's and Robert's country house. Various locations of these grounds get introduced, the garden bench, the inner courtyard of the house, the cherry tree, yet right from the beginning, a particular disturbance of the idyll can be perceived. Both couples, Anna and Robert as well as Laura and Paul, seem to have problems; the mother Anna shows signs of depression, and the two sisters are estranged. Arslan uses static images for introducing the locations, where the story will be set in the beginning of the film. The soothing sound of wind, birds chirping and crickets reflect the original ambient noise during the filming. Even before the first image, during the flash of the production information, these sounds carry the audience to a peaceful summer setting, far away from signs of human conglomerations and their side effects. Arslan refrains from the use of artificial light and soundtrack. Often, his camera is a static, silent, and detached observer. The display of empty versus lived spaces underline the contradictions between presence and absence, belonging and not belonging. Thereby, Arslan reveals the dichotomy closely connected to the feeling of home, especially in cultural hybridity, the conflict between the familiar and the 'uncanny' (Freud, 1982).

After his Berlin trilogy, the immersion and interrelationship between narrative and the topography of the city of Berlin appeared to be Arslan's trademark and to be the link of his work to films by other Turkish-German filmmakers of the time (see Chapter 2); for *Vacation*, he chose the setting of the rural region of Uckermark. At first, this setting seems to reflect the habits of the representatives of the Berlin School, who frequently produce their films in the rural areas surrounding Berlin, but in Arslan's case, this move is a clear cut from his previous films about Erol, Can, and Deniz (Abel, 2008). Furthermore, the idea of moving to the countryside reflects the imagination of city people, who associate the rural life with 'rest and permanence in comparison with their fast and busy modern lives' (Hermann, 2012, p.170), and

thereby, Arslan emphasises the desire for another place of belonging, apart from urban excitement, through the escape to a place that supposedly fulfils the longing for happiness. In this sense, Arslan underlines the spatiality of the notion of home, which is eventually deconstructed due to the family's announced return to the city in the end of the film. As the newcomers in the village, the family seems to have no ties whatsoever to the locals, except for Max, who has a local girlfriend and who frequently meets with the village youth. Nevertheless, due to their outsider status, they are the strangers in the village, neither participating in nor belonging to the village culture and thus are confronted with the clash of two cultures similar to the Turkish-German protagonists of Arslan's Berlin trilogy.

Again, as in his other films, Arslan mostly refrains from expressing emotions or passions overtly (Knörer, 2009). He rather concentrates on moods. While Arslan remains true to his naturalistic style, he takes new paths regarding his casting. The protagonists of his Berlin trilogy were unknowns, with mainly laypeople as actors and actresses. The artificiality and amateurism that was often displayed by the actors of the previous films resulted in a particular estrangement of the audience. In *Vacation*, however, the audience recognises numerous famous actors and actresses. Still, their acting is rather restrained, practiced, allowing the audience to construe the scenes or identify with the characters according to their own understanding and experiences. Also, this instance of Brecht's estrangement effect (see, for example, Brecht, 1967)⁹³ does not allow the audience to identify with the characters. The effects of this technique are twofold. On one hand, Arslan provides a countless number of interpretations, and on the other hand, he risks (perhaps intended) a lack of identification with the characters creating disconcertment in the audience. Yet, the acting also is marked by a combination of casualness and precision. The distanced acting allows the actors to project options of a before and an after to the current narrative. Frequently, this results in moments of pauses and indefiniteness, which lack time and goal orientation. At first glance, it reflects the failure of the characters, but in essence, it is a quiet, yet determined protest against inevitability. This detachment

⁹³ *Estrangement effect (Verfremdungseffekt)* is a concept in the field of performing arts that was coined by the German playwright Berthold Brecht. It refers to a critical distance created by a particular mise-en-scène, which directs the attention of the audience to the meaning of the events portrayed rather than their sequence in order to foster a critical observance and evaluation of the portrayed events (for example, Brecht, 1967).

exaggerates the feeling of the characters of being lost as the audience is lost and cannot directly sympathise with any of them, which makes their search for belonging even more significant.

In an interview about his film (with Michael Baute), Arslan claims that he did not want to ‘sociologise’⁹⁴ the characters, as in the end, a character and his or her behaviour cannot be explained this way (Baute, 2007). However, I believe that the characters are highly sociologised implicitly, as Arslan plays with social classes, gender roles, and family structures, and thereby, suggests that these aspects are not cast in stone but rather in a flux. Besides the familial relationships and conflicts, Arslan also fathoms the conditions and mechanics of the German bourgeoisie. The audience learns that Paul is a journalist, Laura is a translator, and Sophie is a musician. Although Arslan insists that the professions are rather ‘a distant echo’⁹⁵ for the narrative (Baute, 2007), they can be categorised as so-called middle-class intellectuals. He had expressed his fear of getting pushed into a particular niche before. However, he chose to reveal the deceiving polarity of values by implicitly portraying social (and cultural) categorisations.

The epicentre of the film is the garden table underneath a cherry tree. This table is used for family meals and talks, and at times, unites four generations of the family. These family members and their relationships among each other are not displayed as a whole but as separate episodes, which sometimes touch others. Similar to his Berlin trilogy, Arslan contrasts different approaches to life and to the search for belonging in order to visualise the ‘psychosocial effects of particular thought patterns and life situations’⁹⁶ (Neubauer, 2011, p.533). Nevertheless, Anna takes on the central role in this film and is at times the only connecting element between the other family members.

6.2.1 The German Ideal Heimat

Thomas Arslan deliberately chose the remote and rural area of Uckermark, outside of Berlin, to reconstruct an idyllic, and at the same time, stereotypically

⁹⁴ ‘soziologisieren’ (Arslan quoted in Baute, 2007).

⁹⁵ ‘ein ferns Echo’ (Arslan quoted in Baute, 2007).

⁹⁶ ‘[...]psychosoziale Auswirkungen bestimmter Denkweisen und Lebenssituationen’ (Neubauer, 2011, p.533).

German concept of home for the purpose of deconstruction. As mentioned before, the German concept of *Heimat* entails a unique flavour (see Chapter 1) and results in a nostalgic longing for belonging, which is well reflected in various forms of art, including film. The concept can be summarised as a longing search for salvation, and nature is inextricably linked to it (Chapter 1). In line with Blickle's idea of *Heimat*, which connects the German bourgeoisie and their appreciation of nature, understood as 'morally good' (Blickle, 2002, p.20), and that of Gert Mattenklott's, who suggests that writings on German landscapes are 'not prose about German's or any other *Heimat*; but is a specifically German way of making oneself feel at home in the world' (1992, p.44), the mythification of nature lies deep in the concept of home and connects nature with identity. Nature in *Vacation*, however, does not function as a safe haven, as a 'ground of common reality' (Blickle, 2002, p.125). In essence, Foucault's concept of heterotopia may be applied to nature in Arslan's film (1984; see Chapter 1). The beauty and peacefulness implies the potential of something else, something better, yet, as it is a constant silent reminder of a utopia that cannot be satisfied and an ever-present companion of the characters that has exclusionary qualities, a space between utopia and dystopia is created – a heterotopia.

The only characters who are unaffected by the rift between reality and utopia are Laura's and Paul's children. They seem to be moving in a microcosm, preoccupied with playing in the unspoiled nature. In the scenes with the children, the peacefulness and the feeling of comfort seem to be uninterrupted. The conflict of their parents and the other family members is not present. In fact, the more the film progresses and the different conflicts manifest, the scenes with the children form an even more intensive contrast. Here, the idyll withstands, nature does in fact appear more placid, and the children more peaceful. This contrast is visible due to the surrounding images filled with conflicts and hopelessness. While the children have not yet eaten the apple of knowledge and seem to not question this place as a home, this *paradise* is not a place of belonging nor a refuge to the adults. Arslan here underlines the association of home with 'innocence and childhood' (Blickle, 2002, p.17), an aspect of home that is lost for the adult characters.

The setting, which promises comfort, safety, belonging and that piece of Grandma's apple pie, entails a powerful presence and an artificiality that is not only reflected by the characters but even the nature, which seems somewhat unreal. With the portrayed seemingly primal landscapes, Arslan again seems to refer to the idea of

an *Ur-Heimat* (Hermann, 2012, p.161)⁹⁷, which is, due to his way of filming and the created rift within this idyll, revealed as utopian. As opposed to *Dealer* and *A Fine Day*, in which nature functioned as a contrast for the grey urban streets and faceless buildings (and tube stations), epitomising the struggle between the worlds of the protagonists, the family in *Vacation* is surrounded by nature throughout the entire film, suggesting a less torn environment at first glance. The beginning and the end of the film show different shots of idyllic places with clear cuts, which create the frame for this film. In the beginning, they portray a promise for something good; in the end, they prove that despite all of the changes that happened to the characters of this film throughout the summer in the Uckermark, nothing really has changed, drawing a line to the final scenes of *Dealer*. The way, Arslan shows the same places in the beginning and at the end of the film with a static camera, jump-cutting from one empty space to another, enforces this sensation.

With *Vacation*, Thomas Arslan moves away from the urban setting of Berlin to the rural setting of Uckermark. The location Berlin played a significant role in the previous Berlin trilogy and appeared to be a part of Arslan's filmmaking style. *Vacation* takes on a different path. Arslan's preoccupation with the topic of belonging and home-seeking can be counted towards the characteristics of Naficy's 'accented cinema' (Naficy, 2001), which places the longing for home and belonging as a reaction to the loss of such displacement and rootlessness. At the same time, *Vacation* resembles elements of a very unique German cinematic tradition, the Heimatfilm, a film genre which started to arise after the Second World War, resulting from the need to recover from the horrors of war but also as a strategy of suppression and had its heyday in the 1950s. The overly colourful films are generally set in rural areas, often in the Bavarian Alps. They mostly revolve around a happy family, love, and friendship⁹⁸. Sabine Hake describes Heimatfilm, which had its climax in the 1950s, as 'the retreat to the harmonious living conditions found in typical landscapes, such as the Bavarian Alps, the Rhine region, the Black Forrest and the Lüneburg Heath' (2002, p.109). Heimatfilms fulfilled the longing for belonging as they entailed a promise of return and the ever-recurring happy end. By calling on the sentimental longings of the

⁹⁷ Eigler and Kugele's book *Heimat: At the Intersection of Memory and Space* (2012) examines cultural manifestations of the German concept of Heimat (home) by focusing on memory and space.

⁹⁸See Johannes von Moltke's *No Place like Home – Locations of Heimat in German Cinema* (2005), which constitutes an impressive, perhaps first comprehensive examination of the German film genre Heimatfilm.

audience, it provided a peaceful, harmonic world as an antipode to the reality of post-war Germany. In a time when the German collective memory, and therefore, the sense of home had suffered an irrevocable identity crisis, Heimatfilms portrayed the German ideal of home, the balmily sighing trees, the bubbling creek, the cozy house, and a happy family. 'Whether celebrating identity or problematizing it, many recent Heimatfilms can be read as expressions of the utopian qualities of *Heimat* which are fed by melancholy as well as by a desire for self-assurance, especially in the German context' (Ludewig, 2011, p.436, see Schlink, 2000). Heimatfilm started its triumph in West Germany at a time when this ideal home was a utopian thought and rather unrealistic. These films tend to remind of an imagined past and an illusionary collective memory in order to provide the audience with a common sense of unity and shared identity. Thus, 'the Heimatfilm provided a simultaneously regressive and progressive fantasy of belonging that enlisted the well-known iconography of *Heimat* in the creation of a new collective identity' (Hake 2002, p.110). In accordance with the cultural historian Ina-Maria Greverus, who suggests that home in a German context is based on an emotional link with a particular, limited territory (in Garnarz and Ligensa, 2012, p.122), Heimatfilm pinpoints this longing for belonging to a particular location. Taking the millions of displaced people after World War II into account, the success of Heimatfilms in the 1950s makes sense. The resemblance of Arslan's *Vacation* and a Heimatfilm includes questions of belonging and the quest for a home besides stylistic elements, such as unspoiled nature.

The first image of the film shows a peaceful, summery forest. After an abrupt cut, the audience is allowed to take a glimpse at the inner yard of the house, followed by the garden and finally the first person, Anna, lost in thought on a bench. All the film's locations get introduced before the opening credits. The portrayed locations exist at first without people and are filled with characters and their stories throughout the film, with the help of the observing camera. Step by step, the audience gets to know the premises and yet, due to the lack of camera panning and frequent cuts, orientation is not possible. Similar to the different shots of various locations, the characters appear one by one without an 'introduction'. The audience only learns about the family what the camera focus allows them to see, expecting them to be observant and attentive to mimics and details, what is being said and what is left out. The static, distanced camera remains while the family ties and stories gain increasingly more clarity and become more problematic. Due to the cinematography and the limited positions of the cameras

on the premises and the natural sounds and lighting, it appears as if the family is only observed by accident, increasing the impression of authenticity for the audience but also the feeling of casualness, one that is associated with the Berlin School of filmmaking. However, the montage of the images is openly aesthetic and abstracted from reality. Thereby, the audience is forced to interpret and reflect the film beyond habitual attitudes (see Abel, 2008).

Similar to *Dealer*, the shots on trees, branches and leaves give the impression of creating borders rather than eliminating them. In *Vacation*, the potential liberating force that nature holds for urbanites fails to prevail as the expected relief and escape to the characters. The suggested freedom and peace in this beautiful landscape as an antipode to the stressful anonymous city life, act as catalyst for the hidden conflicts and longing of the family members. These ‘aesthetic catalysts’ (Bazin, 2005) increase the suffering of the characters by forcing them to deal with their unfulfilled longing for belonging.

The recurring shots of trees, meadows, and deserted landscapes function as, what Noël Burch calls ‘pillow shots’ (Burch, 1979, see Knörer, 2007), a shot on unrelated still life, cutting away from the suffering of the characters, referring to the films of Ozu, a Japanese filmmaker, who suggests that pillow shots function as the representation of ‘another plane of reality’ (Burch, 1979). In essence, Arslan’s pillow shots create the feeling of a world parallel to that of the characters. Besides the effect of revealing the artistic nature of the film, it suggests that there are other options. Burch postulates that ‘The particularity of these shots is that they suspend the diegetic flow [...] while they never contribute to the progress of the narrative proper, they often refer to a character or a set, presenting or re-presenting it out of the narrative context’ (Burch, 1979). These seemingly interrupting shots reveal Arslan’s intervention as the film’s creator in order to visualise the polarity of the stormy, potentially life-changing conflicts of the family members on the one hand and the peaceful, unperturbed nature on the other hand. With this constant pulling-out of the story, he enforces the sensation that the characters are lost, as even the spectator is inclined to feel this way and is prevented from developing sympathy for any of the characters.

The peaceful nature stands in contrast to the grey, faceless metropolis Berlin as portrayed in his Berlin trilogy. As already suggested before in *Dealer* but even more so in *A Fine Day*, Arslan used the dichotomy of beautiful nature and the urban reality to describe the struggle for belonging of the protagonist. The idyllic nature in *Vacation*

is ever present, even in the house, as the leaves in front of the windows block the view, as the field flower bouquet, and through the constant sounds of chirping birds and crickets, the sighing of the leaves, and it thereby intensifies the inevitability of the family's conflicts and struggle for belonging. Like Arslan, Heimatfilms also use the technique of contrasting; while the polarities in it are clean cut and are used to enforce a particular value system. *Vacation* is filled with interplays of the polarities of the self and the other, belonging and alienation established via Arslan's filmic techniques, and thereby, constantly constructing and deconstructing the sense of home. The natural world, life-affirming, beaming with life, stands in contrast to the beautifully renovated, tidily kept and comfortably decorated domestic spaces, the house and the garden, which are mostly portrayed as lifeless and empty (Hermann, 2012, p.168). Despite being surrounded by beautiful landscapes, even nature does not provide an escape for the characters. The long, calm takes on green, sighing trees, the summer breeze, chirping birds and crickets create an impression of an ambience of peaceful tranquillity; yet, Arslan's long, motionless shots of people who mostly do not move or talk with each other suggest a looming storm. The surrounding nature stands in contrast to the increasing suffering of the characters. By ostensibly portraying stagnation and slowness, Arslan, in fact, intensifies the feeling of unrest and creates 'intensive movement' on screen as well as in the audience (Schick, 2011, p.82). The camera, which observes the scenes seemingly from far away creates clear, even geometric compositions.

The house could represent an anchor for belonging. It seems very comfortable with its cozy interiors. The shots inside the house are generally warm and flooded with sunlight. The house is old, yet tastefully renovated. The rooms are filled with personal belongings, such as books, souvenirs, or photos, which instantaneously evoke a feeling of comfort and belonging. The numerous identity markers give the house the taste of a *lieu de mémoire* (Nora, 1996). However, most family members feel cramped and constrained in the house and try to escape from it. Laura and Sophie did not spend their childhood in the house and behave purely like visitors, while Max, who did spend his childhood in the house, feels terribly restricted and rarely spends time at the house, not even for family meals. The residence as a manifestation of home is thus also deconstructed by Arslan. While Deniz's flat in *A Fine Day* lacks any personal decoration and emotional attachment and disqualifies as a place of belonging, the house in *Vacation* is filled with personal objects. Nevertheless, the family members do

not show emotional attachment and its inhabitants Anna and Max also seem to move around the house like strangers. Arslan reveals the illusion about such givens as home and underlined by Arslan's consequently static camera throughout most of the entire film. Thereby, Arslan intensifies the feeling of aporia. The camera, which follows the characters, and the pronounced camera panning, which was essential in Arslan's previous films, is almost not at all used in *Vacation*. I agree with Michael Sicinski, who calls Arslan's style of filming:

[...] an almost Bergmanesque approach to intricate human dynamics, while filtering it through a lyrical, long/take style more of a piece with Arslan's French or Taiwanese contemporaries than with much of the German-language cinema of the time (2013).

The static camera, inexorably framing the characters for almost too long, describes them mostly via medium shot takes even after they have escaped the image frame and are no longer visible to the audience. Anything that is unspoken between two characters, anything that lies between two shots is as important. The audience has to decipher the emotional and societal connectedness. Thereby, these shots deliberately conceal as much as they reveal. This balance between discretion and penetration reflects the threshold between distance and nearness, thereby giving each perspective and each scene the same significance and enforcing the feeling of inevitability, of being trapped.

Despite or perhaps because of his apparent detachment from his family, Max's search for belonging seems to be the most hopeful one in the film. He is happy with his girlfriend and dreams of a life in a big city. As opposed to the other characters, his feeling of belonging has not been disappointed yet as he seems to have never truly felt at home. One of the earlier scenes of the film epitomises this sensation. Arslan uses his preferred window shot, which also occurs in the opening scenes of all three Berlin trilogy films and functions as an introduction of the looming struggle between the film's character(s). Despite being a rather minor character in *Vacation*, Max takes the role of Ahmed, Can, and Deniz. Ultimately, this could propose that he, despite his apparent minor role is in fact the person that stands for another potential for belonging, outside of home-building givens.

The scene lasts from 00:01:08 to 00:01:37 and is part of the long prequel before the opening credits. It introduces Max and his girlfriend and indicates the general direction of the film as a search for something else. Arslan uses a medium shot and a static camera to catch the scene; only a small part of the open window can be seen, while the chirping of the birds exudes a peaceful atmosphere. Although the audience can only see a small part of Max's room, it appears to be a typical room of a teenager, with some CDs on the bedside table, a comic drawing on the wall, and a bedside lamp without a lampshade. The two teenagers share a cigarette without speaking. The audience immediately understands the intimacy between the two based on the looks he gives her and the naturalness of their cigarette sharing. The twittering of the birds holds the promise of an idyllic place outside of the window, yet the camera angle denies the audience a proper look, increasing the feeling of being trapped. Despite the clear bond between the two, the scene leaves a feeling of confinement to the house, underlined by his sad, longing look out of the window and the overwhelming presence and melancholy of the other family members. Yet, outside with his girlfriend, he is a different person. He is free and full of dreams about building a life somewhere else, a place of belonging, which is, due to his age, not yet realisable and restricted by the confinement of the family house. With the character of Max, Arslan proposes a prospective direction towards a place of belonging beyond the net of home based on the family imposed by society. Yet, another putative *primordial* foundation of home is deconstructed (Geertz, 1994). As opposed to Mareike Herrman, who suggests that Max is caught between 'Fernweh'⁹⁹ and hesitation' (Hermann, 2012, p.170), I believe that similar to Leyla in *Brothers and Sisters*, his search for a place of belonging is also limited by his young age, rather than internal struggles.

Bourgeois ideals, such as family, specified gender roles and determination are questioned as well; in fact, Arslan plays with the satiety of this group and the illusion of this categorisation. In an interview with Lukas Foerster, Arslan suggests 'that in many respects the bourgeois system is a closed system, in which people who do not concur entirely with their own self-conception at most can take a peripheral position' (2007)¹⁰⁰. Especially, the men of the family take on these marginal roles. This is

⁹⁹ Although not entailing the same degree of longing, a close enough English equivalent is 'wanderlust' (interestingly enough yet another anglicised German word).

¹⁰⁰ 'dass die bürgerliche Gesellschaft ein in mancher Hinsicht geschlossenes System darstellt, in welchem Menschen, die dem eigenen Selbstverständnis nicht vollständig entsprechen, höchstens eine periphere Position einnehmen können.' (Foerster, 2007).

particularly expressed by Robert and his new shirt. After a habitual compliment by Laura, he replies that it does not matter what he is wearing because it always looks worn for years on him, underlining his peripheral standing within the family. As opposed to other Berlin School films, such as *Monday They Will Bring the Windows* by Ulrich Köhler (2006) or *I am Guilty* by Christoph Hochhäusler (2005), which try to subvert family and bourgeois structures, *Vacation* attempts to reveal, determine and understand how bourgeoisie structures work and their preconditions.

While the Heimatfilms of the post-war time attempted to fill a longing for a home that was often unattainable but something that potentially lies around the corner, Arslan's *Vacation* construes this ideal of home in the German context as an illusion. In his book *Heimat as Utopia* (2000), Schlink emphasises the unattainability of home, which is supported by Arslan with *Vacation*. It is clear that *Vacation* alludes to the unfulfilled longing of the characters, and the film does not conclude their search. The fact that Anna announces that they will sell the house in the end of the film suggests that this home, if it ever was one to them, is irretrievably lost. In essence, Arslan uses elements of the ideal home, deconstructs them, and thereby, breaks open social categorising and exposes the self-deceiving qualities of such an ideal. This gives way to other forms of home-making, which essentially is necessary, especially for people with a culturally hybrid background.

The family lives out their conflicts within a struggle of emotional nearness and distance. The physical nearness allows the conflicts to reach the surface. While the family was separated, the illusion of a happy family could be kept up. But the longer they stay together, the more the façade crumbles. As opposed to Heimatfilm, the natural idyll does not seem to be comforting to the characters. Laura especially struggles with it, which is underlined by her comment 'How calm it is here'. This scene, among others, exemplifies the above described polarities (00:04:26–00:05:23). For the first long conversation in the film, Arslan uses a medium shot of Anna and Laura. Anna sits straight facing the camera while Laura is shown from the side in a seemingly comfortable position with her legs on another chair. Laura starts the conversation with a comment about the beauty of the garden, which is instantaneously undermined by her mother, who suggests that it is a lot of work. The spectator's expectation for a peaceful mother-daughter talk is, due to the negative reaction of Anna, quickly interrupted. Also, the fact that Laura is thinking about quitting her job as translator suggests that she is unhappy. After a longer pause, her comment about

the peacefulness of the place strikes as ambiguous and implies that it stands in contrast to her inner turmoil, which is at this point only indicated.

6.2.2 *Family as Home?*

Home is often inseparably connected to family. As suggested in Chapter 1, 'Family, friends, and community are one of the most important points of reference, a safe haven, in relation to which people define themselves'. Kaes proposes that *Heimat* means 'the site of one's lost childhood, of family, of identity' (1989, p.165). The family in *Vacation* is not the safe haven it could promise to be. It is rather the centre and the source of conflicts, which results in serious transitions. The family dinner scene sums up the simmering conflicts in the family and reminds of the dinner table scene in *Brothers and Sisters* that equally epitomises the family's quarrels (01:08:02–01:12:24). The scene is characterised by a minimalistic use of filmic techniques, characteristic of the Berlin School of filmmaking (see Chapter 2). Again, Arslan creates a paradoxical atmosphere of realism and a feeling of alienation through the persistent, observing static camera.

Laura, Anna, Sophie, Robert, and Paul are sitting at the kitchen table. Arslan's medium shot takes Anna in the middle, while her two daughters sit next to her; Paul is next to Laura and Robert is next to Sophie, all four with their sides to the camera. One empty chair suggests that someone is missing. Arslan's tendency to observe rather than narrate in his cinematic style (Löser, 2004, p.139) is underlined by the static camera angle throughout the entire scene, which results in a feeling of realism and an almost uncomfortable voyeurism, while also enhancing the discrepancy between nearness and distance, because even though the spectator witnesses a very personal scene, the camera neither allows to detect details in the family's faces nor to develop sympathies to a particular character. Clearly, Anna takes on the role of the family head. She asks about the time and is surprised that it is already after 11 pm; she is clearly disappointed. After revealing that she was waiting for her first husband, the situation starts to escalate.

Laura is shocked and angry that her mother did not ask the sisters first about a potential visit by their father. Robert, visibly hurt, leaves the table, briefly blocking the view of the camera, which reminds one of the sensation of voyeurism. From the off, the audience can hear the slamming door. These elements increase the feeling of an

imminent escalation of the conflict. Still, the atmosphere remains calm for the moment and the family nip on their wine, guardedly. The silence seems to make Paul leave the table as well. The sound of the closing door marks the overspill of emotions. Laura breaths heavily with anger. She does not understand why her mother still feels for her ex-husband. Laura's disapproval towards her mother's behaviour sparks a cold fight between Laura and her sister Sophie who had remained silent until then. The rivalry between the sisters is enhanced by their different opinions regarding their father. Anna's reaction to Laura's and Sophie's almost childish fight is laughter. After Laura has left the room with the slamming door to be heard from the off, Sophie says the meaningful sentence 'We can live at the end of the world but you and your stories we can't get rid of' (quotation Sophie). In the end, Anna is left alone in the room.

The confrontation at the dinner table underlines the constant struggle between distance and nearness. The static and observing camera and the lack of cuts intensify the smouldering family conflict. With the conflict evolving, the static camera is almost unbearable for the audience, and Arslan's uncompromising persistence makes the conflict uncomfortable and intensifies the feeling of an inevitable loss of belonging. Also, the unagitated and reserved mode of acting and the long pauses add to this feeling. This scene is exemplary for the family conflict. Rather than exploding, the idyllic family world is slowly imploding, leaving no room for a true sense of belonging, where family is a home based on unconditional love (see Chapter 1).

Family as a place of belonging is at stake throughout the film. Sophie's last comment during the dinner scene sums up the family conflict. The construct of family as a place of belonging is questioned by Arslan, as yet another given home-creating aspect. It also entails the inevitability of certain identity markers and therefore also the restrictions that come along with it. Through the family structures in *Vacation*, Arslan tackles another side of home, its potential of restricting and holding back – in other words, exclusion through inclusion. The cinematic technique of strict framing makes this confinement even more visible. The family is a social structure held together by primordial ties that people were born into, in essence, involuntarily. Thus, Arslan challenges the implicitness of family as part of the place of belonging called home.

The farce of a happy family has built a prison around each of the characters. Each character plays her or his role to fulfil an artificial family idyll, which restricts them in their search for happiness and belonging. According to Arslan, family is 'a complex, emotional force field with strong movements of attraction and defense'

(Arslan quoted in Baute, 2007). The highly complex relationships within the family stand in contrast to the unagitated cinematography and dramaturgy. The narratives of the search for belonging and happiness of each character do not require suspense-creating elements, as they entail already enough existential high pressure (see Arslan quoted in Baute, 2007). Even though the film revolves around a family reunion of an otherwise geographically dispersed family, the predominant theme of *Vacation* is estrangement. The relationships between any family members are rather distanced, although it is clear that they were once filled with warmth and fondness. However, the emotional attachment of the past in combination with the simmering conflicts between the individual family members increases the feeling of estrangement. It appears as if none of them behaves naturally with the others. Even the children of Laura and Paul display rather artificial behaviour and are essentially somewhat left alone.

With regard to his Berlin trilogy, Arslan introduces a family that, at first glance, clearly stands in contrast to the family of *Brothers and Sisters* and Can's family in *Dealer*. Compared to them, they seem to not be restricted externally with regards to the directions of their lives. Yet, this implicitness is exactly what restricts the family in *Vacation*. Arslan underlines that even with the supposedly right external conditions, the struggle for belonging and happiness is the same. Thomas Arslan's story describes a rather simple story filled with banalities, yet a closer look reveals the complexity of the characters and their search of identity, which is enforced by the limited space of Anna's grounds. Even though the family is not restricted with regards to mobility, such as the siblings in *Brothers and Sisters* or Can in *Dealer*, within the frame of their search for belonging, Anna's house and garden represent their Berlin Kreuzberg.

Vacation is almost entirely confined to the premises of Anna's country house. The whole family together can only be seen at the very end of the film, during the funeral service of the grandmother and the following family lunch. Through individual conversations, mostly two on two, the family constellations are revealed. Each character seems to take on a different role with another family member. The film feeds off the shifting identities in the minds of the characters as well as the changing behaviour and roles with other family members. Arslan plays also with the inequality within a family. Clearly, the women take on a superior role and are contrasted by the rather weak, at times even mute men. Interestingly, again Arslan (as particularly in *A Fine Day*) predominantly lets his story revolve around women, who are the epicentres of most of the conflicts displayed in the film.

Arslan's frequent long takes of the natural, rural area stands in contrast to the longing for the city of Anna and Max but also of Laura, who suggests at one point that it was a mistake to spend the summer at the house. *Vacation* proposes a home, which turns out to be not a place of stability but a catalyst for transition and, in essence, not a place of belonging. Anna and her son Max underline this sensation. Anna and her family moved to the countryside on purpose to escape the loud and strenuous city life in Berlin. But neither of them seems to like the slow and lonely life anymore and would like to move back to the city. Only Robert enjoys the rural life, yet he is aware that they are still characterised as newcomers to the locals and thus excluded from them. Especially Max suffers in these conditions. As a teenager, his exclusion is marked by frequent provocations and open animosities. This exclusion, with the former city people as the outsiders – the others – can be compared to the situation of migrants in the midst of Germans. I would go as far as characterising Max as the second-generation outsider in this film, who struggles between two worlds; on the one hand, his role as the second-generation urbanite in these rural surroundings, arranging his life within exclusion both from his family and the locals, and on the other hand, his longing for the promising city life.

6.2.3 Home as a Habit?

Frequently, the audience can detect a certain nostalgic view on childhood memories, which once provided grounds for a feeling of home of the characters. This *lieu de mémoire* (Nora, 1996) is a place that exists through the shared memory of the family members (except for Max, the latecomer) but that no longer fills the spot of home. Certainly, Arslan has no interest in 'excavating the past' (Herrmann, 2012, p.160). Arslan strictly ties his film to the present. He refrains from using cinematic tools, such as flashbacks or a narrator, yet he reveals elements from the family's past through conversations, mimic, and gestures.

As Arslan notes, the family has seen better times but they still live as they would live in the past (Arslan quoted in Baute, 2007). They measure their happiness based on moments of happiness in the past, which clearly affects their search for belongingness. Here, the temporal aspect of home (see Chapter 1) becomes important. The concept of time connected to a feeling of loss is ever present in *Vacation*. The recurring shots of empty locations on Anna's grounds leave the illusive impression

that time has stopped, or in fact, does not matter. Yet, the characters prove that this is not the case. Most of them are somewhat captured in the past and are preoccupied with chasing after the lost feelings, after putative happy times in the past. Laura and Paul prolong the end of their failed marriage and it appears as if all the adult characters, by deciding to spend time together at the Uckermark, are searching for happiness that lies in the past. Anna particularly dwells on the past, underlined by her comment: ‘Yes, but meanwhile everything has become different here. In the first years we constantly had visitors. Now no one visits anymore. And Max will also move out soon. The house slowly becomes desolate’¹⁰¹. She cannot let go of her first husband, the father of her two daughters. When the rural life depresses her progressively, she re-initiates contact with him. Besides the presumably happy family times, he may also remind her of the time when she was a photographer, a profession she gave up when she moved to the Uckermark. Although not explicitly said, she seems to regret it and would like to return to her old profession. In essence, the family is tied to a collective memory that strives from the search for home in an attempt ‘to recover a memory of happiness’ (Curtis and Pajackowska, 1994, p.199). Anna’s nostalgic memories of the past linger over the seemingly welcoming house with its numerous guest rooms and beautiful interior ‘[l]ike ghosts from the past these spaces serve as reminders of another time’ (Hermann, 2012, p.169).

All family members, except for Max and the kids, as opposed to searching for new places of belonging, a new home, proceed with their search for happiness along established, habitual paths. They search for a *lieu de mémoire* that can no longer withstand the polarity of nearness and distance, belonging and alienation. Arslan thereby not only condemns the characters’ reluctance for rethinking habits, he also challenges the dichotomy of home versus modernity and progress, which lies deep in the German concept of home and which may have the power to result in an outdatedness and potential inapplicability of such places of memory as home.

Laura and her sister Sophie were very close in their childhood. Yet, throughout the years, they have moved apart from each other; in fact, they do not know much about the other anymore. While Laura’s life seems to be constraining her and has reached a dead-end, Sophie leads the bourgeois life of a musician, free and unattached. The contrasting lifestyles and Laura’s dissatisfaction with her life feed her sister’s

¹⁰¹ ‘Ja, aber inzwischen ist das hier alles anders. In den ersten Jahren hatten wir ständig Besuch. Jetzt kommt gar keiner mehr. Und Max wird auch bald ausziehen. Das Haus verödet langsam’.

conflict. One scene highlights the emotional coldness between the two. Sophie smokes a cigarette on the bench outside of the house. It is morning. Laura joins her and they talk awkwardly, estranged about trivialities, underlining an emotional distance between the two sisters. It appears as if they no longer have much to say to each other. The scene lasts from 00:53:38 until 00:55:19. With a medium shot, Arslan catches the two sisters, demonstrating once again the balance between nearness and distance to the characters, which is characteristic of Arslan's style and the austerity of the Berlin School. Sophie's comments about her mother's premises indicate that the expectations she had from her family reunion were disappointed. She had sleep problems because it was too silent and the garden seemed much bigger in earlier times. Clearly, she was expecting to feel more comfortable in the countryside. It appears as if the mother's grounds have lost its characteristic of a 'genius loci' (in Vallega, 2003, p.45). This scene with Arslan's observing camera implicitly speaks of loss, the loss of childhood nearness, the loss of the feeling of belonging, and even the loss of love. The arrival of Sophie brings some positivity and levity to the family, the family even laughs together at the table. But her positive attitude cannot resist the melancholy that is created by the conflicts of the other family members and the all-pervasive, almost accusing aura of supposedly happy times, which is enhanced by mementos and photos in the house. The longer she stays, the more the conflicts surface, the more she gets contaminated by the same melancholy. The trip to the country is not a break from the everyday life but an exceptional situation. Thomas Arslan notes that '*Vacation* deals with people, who have manoeuvred themselves to an impasse and are situated in a condition of ossification and paralysis' (3Sat, 2015).¹⁰²

The transition from one world to the other, from ordinary life to the time off is marked by luggage getting carried, pulled, or dragged through the shot. It seems to be a difficult transition, with heavy luggage, entering one side of the screen and leaving from the other side. It underlines the potential of hard work as opposed to the positive side of vacation. Again, Arslan's affinity with transitions steps into the foreground. While the Berlin trilogy, especially *A Fine Day* lived off the mobility of its protagonists, *Vacation* uses the motif of arrival and departure, not the act of travelling per se. First, Laura, Paul, and their children arrive, followed by Anna's mother, and finally Sophie. All arrivals are marked by the same gesture by Anna. It seems almost

¹⁰² 'In *Ferien* ging es um Menschen, die sich eine Sackgasse manövriert haben und sich in einem Zustand der Erstarrung und der Lähmung befinden' (3Sat, 2015).

forced each time she takes the luggage and brings it into the house. Claudia Lenssen describes the character of Anna as a person who blends a strong ego with an almost pretentious humility (2007). The repeated gesture displays and deplores the pretentiousness that lies in habits of politeness, and thereby, reveals that the feeling of home may be based on involuntary or even indoctrinated habits. By manifesting such sensations through Anna's repeated gesture, Arslan challenges them and invites the spectator to reflect on them.

6.2.4 Love as Anchor of Belonging?

Love, unconditional love, is closely tied to the feeling of home. The subject of love is ever-present in the film, yet approached via the absence or rather the loss of love. In order to reveal illusions about love as an anchor of belonging, Arslan portrays three generations of women and their (problematic relationship) with love.

Anna is in her fifties and lives with her second husband and their teenage son in the region of Uckermark. She has two daughters from her first marriage, Laura, who lives in Berlin with her family, and her younger sister Sophie. Their father left Anna more than 20 years ago, yet she seems to still be attached to him and is very hurt when he does not accept her dinner invitation. Anna is a quiet and introverted woman. With her absent-mindedness, even apathy, she moves slowly, fairylike, yet attentively through the scenes. She devotedly takes care of her mother. Her voice is soft, but her position as the leader of the family is always clear. Loving touch and kisses elucidates the love her husband Robert feels for her. She, on the other hand, is cold to him – almost unapproachable. The relationship between Anna and Max, her son, is notable. Anna treats him indifferently as if he does not really belong to the family. Her current husband has to suffer the same fate. He seems to be the quiet man behind her. Clearly, she is the one who makes the decisions. After Robert wrote Anna a letter that apparently said they can leave the house, in the next scene, which lasts from 1:17:23 until 1:18:17, he is outside and hangs out the laundry for drying. Anna enters the scene to help him. Here, Arslan, with his usual static camera and the medium shot, lets them have the life-changing conversation about moving away while they are continuing with this trivial task of hanging out the laundry. In giving each act the same significance, Arslan 'adds another layer of often ambiguous meaning' (Knörer, 2009). In this case, he almost trivialises this supposedly difficult decision.

Anna is the lynchpin of the story. Even though she seems to be holding the reins, she is always strangely absent and cold to her family members. At times, her soft voice and absent-mindedness reaches an irritating level. Sometimes, her eyes waft like a cloud of flies. Even though she is the mother of three, the grandmother of two and the caring daughter to her mother, her behaviour is indifferent and does not have the effect of strengthening ties of belonging. Especially, the relationship with her daughter Laura, which is highly reserved, at times heated (initiated by Laura) stands out. The audience does not learn why they do not get along well with each other, but the dinner table scene suggests that Laura's animosity is a result of Anna's behaviour towards her ex-husband. Blickle's 'idealized mother' (2002, p.17) as constitutive in expressions of home is not found in *Vacation*. Similarly, Laura does not show much affection towards her children. Throughout the entire film, only the father Paul can be observed playing with the children. Again, Arslan challenges the bond between mother and child as a source of belonging. The expected motherly love is at no point in the film portrayed, and thus, does not provide grounds for a feeling of belonging. Thus, the traditional hatchery of home does not give any of the characters the needed point of reference and feeling of belonging.

Laura is Anna's oldest daughter. She is married to Paul and has a son and a daughter. The whole family spends their summer holidays at her mom's. A latent tension between Laura and her husband can be felt from the very beginning of the film. She treats him with unease and rejection, even open hostility when he tries to kiss her. As opposed to Paul, the audience learns about her struggle through several scenes, in which she distances herself from the family circle for a walk or for checking her phone for messages. Slowly, he starts to notice the change in his wife's behaviour, yet his advances remain unanswered. The relationship between Laura and Paul is increasingly revealed to be at a very poor stage. Clearly, Paul searches for attention and intimacy. He continuously attempts to initiate endearment with his wife, yet she rejects him every time. In order to fulfil his desire, he makes contact with a strange woman at the lake, and later in the film, he attempts to kiss Sophie.

On her birthday, Laura tells Paul about her affair. The scene starts almost harmoniously. Paul pours two glasses of wine, one for Laura, and one for himself. Arslan's distanced, static camera, very particularly here, functions as a frame for the proceedings in this scene. Shortly before Laura tells Paul about her affair, the camera is focused on the house from the outside, allowing the audience to see the couple only

through the windows, almost like spying. Crickets chirp and no artificial light is used except for the lighting inside the house. Due to the immobility of the camera, it appears as if Laura leaves the room in the moment of Paul's arrival, as if she attempts to escape from the inevitable confession. The next scene is filmed inside the room with its clear lines and its lack of comfort. Immediately, the audience understands that something uncomfortable is about to happen, initiated by the cold acceptance of Paul's glass of wine and Laura's indifference. Laura directly puts the glass away as if this was the final straw that broke the camel's back. The inside scene is filmed with a medium shot and the usual static camera and lasts from 00:29:53 until 00:35:06, which makes it one of the longest scenes in the film. The coldness and anonymity of the furnishing of the room reflects the estrangement of Laura and Paul. Rather than an emotional fight, the two behave rather disorientedly and are speechless. The clear lines and almost graphic structures of the *mise-en-scène* underline the emotional distance between the two. The scene starts with a full-on shot on Laura who sits in an armchair and looks at the new watch she got as a birthday present from her husband. The shot is also held when Paul enters the camera frame. Due to the framing, the audience is only allowed to see Paul's side profile. Laura sits straight to the camera, allowing the audience to study her emotions better than Paul's. The tension of the two is almost tangible. It is clear that something uncomfortable is about to happen. They start with some small talk, which after seconds, turns into suppressed animosity. Almost unexpectedly, Laura begins to speak about her affair. There is no emotional outburst; it is only Laura's heavy breathing that allows the viewers to make conclusions about her emotional state. The dry, almost business-like conversation about the affair exudes the feeling of a lack of love between the two. Slowly, the tension rises, which eventually causes Paul to leave the frame of the camera to get his bed sheets. Laura remains in her armchair but leaves soon after Paul returns to sleep on the couch.

Through his static shot, Arslan creates a feeling of unchangeability, aloofness, and essentially, of a lack of love, which is also reached by the lack of background sounds. The audience can concentrate unobstructed on the little nuances in Laura's gestures and mimics, which remain suppressed and strangely cold. After about one third of the film, the audience learns about the reasons for the distanced behaviour of the couple. Paul calls upon Laura's sense of responsibility for their family and their place of home by asking 'You want to give up everything we have?' Thereby, Arslan highlights the difficulty of a clear-cut situation between stability, the past, and the

longing for belonging, challenging elements that are habitually connected with the feeling of home.

The matriarch of the family, the grandmother, played by Gudrun Ritter, speaks about love similarly to Deniz's mother in *A Fine Day*. Both suggest that they did not love their husbands in the beginning but grew on them and got used to them with time. In *Vacation*, Arslan gives another reason for this attitude towards love what was believed to be based on cultural attitudes and givens in *A Fine Day*. He therefore questions social categorising. Also, the grandmother takes on various roles depending on who she is encountering. During her talk with Laura alone, she is like a typical grandmother – tender, loving, and equipped with the concomitant wisdom. However, when Sophie joins them in the hospital, she reacts rather coldly towards the younger sister. With her daughter, she seems to have a difficult relationship as she treats her with discontent. She never directly speaks to the male characters throughout the entire film, which underlines their lower significance during the conflicts in the family. Thereby, Arslan once again subverts patriarchal identity constructs, which are often not only stereotypically connected to the Turkish culture (see Hofstede, 1983), but also with the traditional German culture and breaks open cultural and social barriers. To both the mother in *A Fine Day*, who represents an essentialist approach to culture and the grandmother in *Vacation*, who subverts social categorising, their grown and now lost love, which once had provided a place of belonging, has left them somewhat rootless.

Love, whether romantic or within a family, is inseparably connected to the feeling of home (see Chapter 1). Arslan underlines this with his characters' stories, who display a lack of love. Real mutual affection and care can only be observed with Max and his girlfriend. Both Robert and Paul experience unilateral love which is not returned by their wives. Anna longs for the lost love of her ex-husband, which remains unfulfilled. Most striking with regards to love is the lack of the display of love among the women of the family. Each of them seems to be too preoccupied with themselves and not allowing themselves to be anchors of belonging for other people. As opposed to *A Fine Day*, where the search for belonging equalled Deniz's search for love and happiness, and love added hopefulness to her search, love in *Vacation* is either lost, unfulfilled, or to most of the characters, one of the sources of their unhappiness.

6.3 Home as Utopia – Utopia as Home?

The search for happiness (Suchsland, 2005) enforced by a life in crisis and the constant feeling of loneliness are central to Thomas Arslan's *Vacation*. Most certainly, the family is suffering from a lack of stability and a real point of reference that provides a basis for a feeling of belonging. The focus of the film lies on the different relationships within the family and their effects on the individual. *Vacation* deals with the very ordinary lives of Germans. Even though it stands in contrast to his Berlin trilogy, which focused on Turkish-German realities, he clearly used his personal experience as the 'other' to approach the lives of a bourgeois German family and their identity conflicts. In his film, Arslan depicts German realities, which can, despite their local restriction (here Uckermark), be transferred onto a more global level.

The cultural hybridity of Thomas Arslan allows him to explore and deconstruct cultural and social categorisations from a hyphenated point of view. No longer limited to the portrayal of the Turkish-German community, he tells the stories of people who are part of what could be called a (stereotypical) German mainstream society, which can be characterised as bourgeois, white, well-educated, (former) urbanites and even with the widespread ideal of two kids. His particular style, including an observing, almost always static camera, the natural sounds and precisely applied soundtrack, his framing and the fact that his stories are not ready-made for the audience expect them to draw from their own life experiences to build up their very own interpretation of the film. Arslan's cultural hybridity allows him to break open social categorising and somewhat deeply anchored German ideals. In other words, even though Arslan does not portray Turkish-Germans as in his Berlin trilogy, *Vacation* displays a home that is constructed and deconstructed by the revelation of the absurdity of categorising. The constant struggle between givens and longings suggests that perceived given conditions, habitually established or indoctrinated, do not solely provide the grounds for a home. Arslan also debunks ideas of longing for belonging, as, nurtured by the aesthetics of the film, the failure of the search of belonging and essentially happiness is staged in a peaceful summer idyll.

The moving away from Berlin, Kreuzberg to the whole of Berlin in *A Fine Day* to the periphery of Berlin describes the development of Thomas Arslan as a filmmaker and perhaps even Turkish-German cinema in a microcosm. While the characters of *Brothers and Sisters* as well as *Dealer* were restricted to the neighbourhood of

Kreuzberg, Leyla in *A Fine Day* moved across the borders of Kreuzberg and the family of *Vacation*, due to their financial opportunities to live a higher quality life in the countryside, which seems to be part of a current bourgeois lifestyle in Germany. Interestingly enough, as the newcomers, who were not born in the Uckermark, Anna, Robert and Max are, similar to the Turkish-Germans in Arslan's Berlin trilogy, the outsiders, the others. In essence, Arslan has not left the field of exclusion.

In my opinion, *Vacation* must be seen as a conclusion to Berlin trilogy without truly concluding the search for a home. While the three films of the Berlin trilogy tell the stories of Turkish-Germans and their search for belonging, with *Vacation*, Arslan illuminates the other side of the cultural token and deconstructs the main pillars of the German understanding of home: nature, past, love and family. In essence, after dealing with the search for belonging of young Turkish-Germans whose struggles are caused by being torn between cultures and options, with *Vacation*, Arslan suggests that the search for a place we can call home is as complicated for people who were not raised between cultures.

Arslan does not complain about or pillory problems in his films; he rather proposes the possibility of many different options, thereby creating a feeling of hope. Hence, as opposed to accepting and underlining the fact that in the end, the predominant German system is right and the most desirable, he breaks open givens by allowing other directions. The German understanding of *home* was often connected to sameness, especially with regards to early nation-building processes (see Chapter 1). Again, Arslan, as a second generation migrant, shows that home can have many facets. Many films by Turkish-German filmmakers deal with home as something lost or a utopian dream. Heimatfilms, on the other hand, propose a German ideal of home. In *Vacation*, Arslan subverts both the notions of belonging in the German Heimatfilm and the traditional Turkish notions of belonging, which can be found in many earlier Turkish-German films. These elements mix to highlight the impossibility of one home based on traditional identity markers. The question of home is never raised explicitly throughout the film. However, each family member is essentially searching for a place of belonging. While most of the characters stand in their own way to succeed in this search due to social and personal expectations as well as their imagined home which, for the most part, lies in the past, Max, as the character who lives between two worlds and whose search at the moment is confined due to his age, represents the potential of

escaping from an essentialist approach to home and finding a home beyond cultural and social boundaries.

In conclusion, Arslan's *Vacation* is traversed by the search for belonging through transformation, which includes the possibility of redevelopment and starting from scratch. This longing for belonging is, in essence, the realisation of an inner potential, a home apart from excluding paradigms.

CONCLUSION

Home as a promise for steadiness in an unsteady world requires a re-evaluation in a world characterised by migration, forced and voluntary. With the resulting growing number of encounters and mélange of cultures, essentialist approaches to culture cannot withhold, while the concept of home is essentialist and excluding in its nature. This dichotomy in combination with the human need for a home confronts not only migrants but potentially anyone affected by changing social constructions with the challenge when defining or redefining their place in the world. Postcolonial studies have introduced the notion of cultural hybridity as an antidote to essentialist views that entail the potential to result in intolerance, undue nationalism and racism (for example Bhabha, 1994; Welsch, 1999; Spivak, 1993). Within the realm of the need for belonging and home, I have found that a transcultural perspective on cultural hybridity (Welsch, 1999; Skrefrud, 2016), which embraces both the stability of a habitual home and the potential of continuous exchange and interaction beyond cultural boundaries, allows to construct new spaces of home apart from demarcating, essentialist polarities. Although in today's world, everybody is affected by these ongoing processes of exchange and negotiation; migrants are particularly confronted with at least two often competing different cultures. The clash of cultures tends to awake monocultural tendencies, particularly with regard to the binary of exclusion and inclusion. The identity and home-constructing processes of migrants are thereby profoundly impacted.

By accompanying Erol, Can, Deniz and Max and analysing their journeys, this research has explored the portrayal of home and its interdependence with cultural hybridity in Thomas Arslan's consecutive fiction films *Brothers and Sisters* (1997), *Dealer* (1999), *A Fine Day* (2001) and *Vacation* (2007). This thesis has articulated developments in Turkish-German cinema, understandings of culture as well as the concept of home within the microcosm of Arslan's films. I, therefore, set off to examine how the hybridisation of cultures and forms of belonging and home respectively were articulated and reflected upon as well as the representational styles Arslan used for this in order to detect key values and beliefs in constructing new forms of home as reflected in Arslan's films and their potential influence on integration processes.

Cinema is a place of encounters. On a technical level, it creates bonds between sound and image, but more decisively, to the audience. Thomas Arslan aspires to transcend his films beyond the life with and between cultures. More than depicting cultural hybridity and the conflicts arising from being located between cultures, Arslan accomplishes to describe what Georg Seeßlen calls the ‘key to a comprehensive alterity’ (2002). The development from *Brothers and Sisters* to *Vacation* makes it clear that each film takes on a particular role within the process of highlighting the strange in all of us, and thereby, blurring not only cultural but also social boundaries.

Göktürk (2000a, 2000c), Burns (2006, 2007) and Schick (2012) suggest that Arslan’s films no longer focus on torn cultural identities and, in fact, propose ‘a new mode of depicting immigrants and their hybrid offspring’ beyond identity conflicts based on their mixed descent (Göktürk, 2000b, p.65). I dispute this approach and demonstrate that he, in fact, thrives on cultural stereotypes to reveal their inapplicability, and thereby, puts the notion of cultural hybridity per se to the test. While the protagonists of *Brothers and Sisters* reflect a cultural hybridity that is characterised by constant negotiations, which is still very much influenced by monocultural understandings of culture, *Dealer* portrays a failed existence due to competing expectations based on Can’s cultural hybridity. *A Fine Day* describes a transcultural cultural hybridity and *Vacation* proposes the hybrid in anybody, even though portraying a German family without a noticeable differing cultural background seen in relation to the preceding films.

Thomas Arslan, born to a Turkish father and a German mother, has experienced himself the consequences of living between cultures. The second-generation Turkish-Germans live in a double dichotomy, not only in two cultures but between the traditions of each culture. The four films by Thomas Arslan that have been subject for the analysis of this doctoral thesis depict cultural crossings and the concept of home in various ways. Arslan purposely uses exaggerated stereotypes and clichés to subvert essentialist approaches to culture and to display the contradictoriness inherent to cultural hybridity. In all of his films, he deals with forms of transition, and thereby, breaks open social and cultural categorisations and reveals the farce of givens, thus also challenging the concept of home as a given, as an exclusionary, essentialist construct. He thereby manages to not only provide a platform for discussing and dealing with the lives of Turkish-Germans critically, but as opposed to earlier Turkish-

German films, which focused on the victimisation of migrants, also to emphasise the potential to live beyond differences in cultural hybridity.

Brothers and Sisters, more than the other films included in this research, displays stereotypes, drawing from widespread clichés about Turkish-Germans. By overemphasising, contrasting and reconstructing them, Arslan lays open the options of young Turkish-Germans in a culturally hybrid environment and caters to the prejudices of the German audience. Instead of proposing a third space, in which the protagonists may resolve their conflicts based on their mixed heritage, Arslan describes a coexistence of the protagonists' options. As a consequence, *Dealer* tells the story of a failed existence due to cultural categorising. Can is indeed a victim of such. On the other hand, in *A Fine Day*, Deniz symbolises a transcultural individual, who defines herself beyond group identity, while *Vacation* transfers the discussion of identity to a family with German origins, and thereby, also challenges essentialist *givens* in the German culture.

Clearly, Arslan used such elements to draw on alleged knowledge about the foreign and to use it as a basis for caricaturing such stereotyping. Yet, by overemphasising clichés, he puts himself in danger of reinforcing them. Especially in *Dealer*, the resulting hopelessness and lack of perspective of the Turkish-German protagonists is overwhelming and constricting. Throughout his oeuvre, it becomes clear that migration topics are, among others, societal foundations rather than problematised niche formations. Ideally, diversity could be understood as a point of departure rather than a problem. However, over and over again, and with particular severity today, the fearful, separating behaviour, which feeds from the fear of loss and of the unknown, prevails. However, it is understood that films, such as those by Arslan, may contribute to a transcultural evolution that promotes inclusion.

With his austere, unagitated style of filming, Arslan achieves a particular interplay between nearness and distance and realism and artificiality, forcing the spectator to look beyond habits and conventions. His minimalistic use of filmic techniques, which reflect his affiliation to the Berlin School of filmmaking and led him to develop his very own style of filmmaking, mostly blurs the boundaries between triviality and meaningfulness. He thereby depicts questions of belonging and identity on various microcosms, focusing on the constellation of the characters and their individual search rather than on the solution of problems.

The question of home, although rarely touched by other research studies about Thomas Arslan's films, is ever-present in and essentially theme-giving to the four films which were part of my film analysis. In essence, most studies on Arslan's oeuvre moved within essentialist paradigms of identity constructions as well as the desire to analyse his films as representative of the Berlin School of filmmaking. Rather than capturing home and cultural hybridity within essentialist paradigms, my findings suggest a need to break open the restricting borders of strict polarities as either side of the binary spectrum is part of the other, and therefore, instead of excluding each other, create each other, are part of each other, and guarantee each other's existence in order to find a home in a world marked by cultural hybridity.

The interplay between the strictly traditional essentialist idea of home and the anti-essentialist state of living of cultural hybridity creates challenges but also a potential for new places of belonging, a new understanding of home. Through this analysis, I have found that home, to culturally hybrid individuals, may not be a *lieu de memoire* (Nora, 1996), but rather a space, not necessarily physical, which originates in the space in between the negotiation of cultures.

Alongside the notion of cultural hybridity, the Berlin trilogy and the subsequent film *Vacation* also describes a development with regards to the concept of home in cultural hybridity. In the case of first-generation migrants, home is often manifested in memories – their own or deriving from a collective memory – which has the potential to mythify the feeling embodied by the father in *Brothers and Sisters*. The weight of these often glorifying memories does not leave much room for other options of home as it implies a temporal dimension only, through which they construct their identity.

Arslan starts off in his *Brothers and Sisters* by portraying different paths Turkish-Germans could take and inseparably connecting the sibling's home to the success of dealing with their lives while torn between two cultures. Erol, Ahmed, and Leyla each have ideas of where to find home; however, the search of each sibling remains inconclusive. Can's search for home between the dichotomy of his two worlds, in which he cannot live at the same time, nor can he give up any of them, is hopeless. Essentially, he has either rejected or lost any potential place of belonging and home. *A Fine Day* entails a much more positive note and introduces Deniz, a Turkish-German woman, who no longer derives her feeling of belonging through group identity but rather gives way for the construction of an individualised home. Deniz evaluates several options for belonging during her search, but finally finds

stability and perhaps a home in her search. With his next feature film *Vacation*, Arslan leaves the field of portraying the lives of Turkish-Germans, yet still, through deconstructing the German ideal of home, challenges a search for home within essentialist categories. In this sense, home can be understood as the willingness to use differences in order to construct identity. Arslan's oeuvre suggests that the socio-cultural and political conditions are not forcing elements but rather provide the frame in which the individual can position himself or herself. Home, thus, can be understood as a constant negotiating and renegotiating process of reality.

In addition, I also argue that Arslan's films essentially describe, the changing phases of Turkish-German cinema in a nutshell, however purposely and not due to conventions. *Brothers and Sisters* manifest numerous stereotypes widely connected to Turkish-Germans, such as the Turkish taxi driver, the criminal, and the seamstress in order to bring attention to their mere existence. This resembles the 'cinema of duty' (Malik, 1996) which was 'firmly responsible in intention – [it] positions its subjects in direct relation to social crisis, and attempts to articulate 'problems' and 'solutions to problems' within a framework of centre and margin' (Bailey cited in Malik, 1996, pp.203–204)¹⁰³. In this sense, *Brothers and Sisters* functions as an introduction to the situation of Turkish-Germans in Germany.

In line with my argumentation, *Dealer* particularly reflects the 'cinema of the affected' (Burns, 2006; 2007). The protagonist Can is depicted as a victim, which emphasises the personal experience of a Turkish-German and focuses on 'the perspective it brought to bear on the alien culture was one in which the focus was unremittingly on alterity as a seemingly insoluble problem, in conflict with either an intercultural or intracultural variety' (Burns in Clarke, 2006, p.133).¹⁰⁴ Similar to Başer in both *40 Square Meters of Germany* (1986) and *Farewell to False Paradise* (1988), Arslan follows the tendency to place the migrant protagonist into a realm of confinement – in Can's case, Berlin Kreuzberg and later the prison.¹⁰⁵

Subsequently, *A Fine Day* can be counted towards films of 'transnational' (Naficy, 1996) or 'postcolonial hybrid' cinema (Shohat and Stam, 1994), depicting the

¹⁰³ As argued in Chapter 2, Wirth's *Until the End of all Days* (1961) and Fassbinder's *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul* (1973) are understood as examples of the cinema of duty phase in Turkish-German cinema.

¹⁰⁴ Başer's *40 Square Meters of Germany* (1986) and *Farewell to False Paradise* (1988) as well as Böhm's *Yasemin* (1988) are considered to be examples of the cinema of the affected in Germany

¹⁰⁵ See also Naficy (1996), who described claustrophobic spaces as a characteristic of cinema of the exile.

protagonist Deniz as a transcultural individual, who bridges multiple influences, attitudes and habits. It reflects the development of the migrant as a victim to individuals who are 'self-confident as subjects and know how to stand their ground rhetorically' (Göktürk, 2000c, p.344)¹⁰⁶. Internalising the pleasures of hybridity, films, such as Fatih Akın's *The Edge of Heaven* (2007), move away from cultural boundaries, realms of confinement and victimisation of migrants. Ultimately, *Vacation* reflects the departure from the art house niche to topics beyond the realities of migrants, which is also accomplished by Alakuş's *A Different League* (2005) or Arslan's *Gold* (2013). By depicting these developments in Turkish-German cinema, Arslan caricatures and dismantles the essential justification for such categorising.

Arslan visualises the connection between the four analysed films with the recurring theme of the window shot in the beginning of each film. These shots symbolise the degree of freedom from cultural or social boundaries of the respective protagonists. The window in *Brothers and Sisters* is closed and allows only a glimpse outside through the blinds, which suggests confinement and predestined options for the protagonists. In *Dealer*, the drapes at first appear closed, and when the camera pans to show where Can is staring at, all there is to see are grey apartment blocks predicting the bad ending for Can based on his limited options. Deniz, on the other hand, looks at the blue sky, implying more freedom and potential. In *Vacation*, Max's window is wide open, allowing the rays of the sun and the chirps of birds to fill the entire room, which must be seen as a progression from Ahmed's, Can's and Deniz's situation, symbolising that his freedom is in fact waiting for him outside of the confinement of his family.

Thus, although I have adopted the term Berlin trilogy for *Brothers and Sisters*, *Dealer* and *A Fine Day*, which is used by most researchers when referring to these films, I argue that, in fact, *Vacation* is the conclusion of a tetralogy, which intends, through the deconstruction of stereotypes and clichés, to reveal the flaws and the inapplicability of excluding cultural and social categorising, by not providing a happy ending in any of his four films and highlighting the difficulties for overcoming the barriers created by such.

Thomas Arslan gave his protagonists more mobility and freedom of mobility, yet at the same time, more so than the first generation of migrants in Germany, they

¹⁰⁶ „...selbstbewusst als Subjekte und wissen sich rhetorisch zu behaupten“ (Göktürk, 2000c, p.344)

are somewhat caught between cultures. By revealing, over-emphasising, and thereby, deconstructing cultural stereotypes about Turkish-Germans as well as Germans (as particularly seen in his film *Vacation*), Arslan paves the way to such a third space; yet, the four films that were the subject of this study do not provide clear-cut solutions for the search for a home in cultural hybridity.

With his films Thomas Arslan shows the possibility of critically engaging with the complexity of the lives of Turkish-Germans, which ultimately creates awareness and grounds for discussion; yet, instead of stressing the migrant as a victim, he emphasises the potential of cultural hybridity to overcome essentialist cultural boundaries and thereby proposes a perspective of the future in which difference enriches rather than excludes.

Arslan presents us with the absurdity of exclusion due to cultural boundaries and categorising paving the way to a cultural hybridity that creates something new rather than combining two existing cultures. Thereby, he suggests that there are other possibilities of home in a world in a constant flux. The transcultural mobility and movement of individuals, ideas, and images have had and still have a transforming effect on the understanding and experiences of home and belonging. In fact, Arslan's four films propose rootlessness as a characteristic of contemporary societies, yet at the same time, he suggests that a home and the feeling of belonging can be (re-)constructed beyond exclusionary boundaries, habits and traditions. The rigid, essentialist paradigm in which identity and forms of belonging feed on oppositions does not do justice to contemporary human perceptions and experience, in particular to the realities of migrants. Nevertheless, the desire and search for a home as the pivotal point remains immanent to human nature.

After showing the inadequacy of constructing a home based on essentialist views on culture and society with Erol and Ahmed in *Brothers and Sisters* and Can in *Dealer*, Arslan proposes the opportunity to construct a home beyond such boundaries with Deniz in *A Fine Day* and Max in *Vacation*. He does not reflect Bhabha's understanding of cultural hybridity as a condition of promising opportunities; instead, he outlines the difficulties and personal struggles necessary to find a home and in fact the potential to fail in the search for a place of belonging, a home. With his films, he also suggests that any essentialist categorising and identity based on exclusion counteracts home-making processes in conditions when different worlds, whether different cultures or different social circumstances, clash. Exclusionary tendencies

based on cultural differences and essentially on the fear of losing privileges as well as mythified values based on a perceived collective memory, deny any person in between worlds to go through a successful home-making process. It is essential to recognise the processual and transformative qualities of culture that questions habitual constants, such as cultural identity, memory and home, and refutes primordial givens, cultural categorising and, in fact, a definite future. Neither does the past provide assured constants nor is the future written in stone. Integration efforts that aim to assimilate are revealed as inadequate. The condition of cultural hybridity allows a re-evaluation of the concept of home, as it allows to build a bridge between the past, the presence and the future. The rediscovery and re-evaluation of the concept of home can help overcome both xenophobia and guilt complexes. Ideally, the discussion about home in cultural hybridity helps reflect on exclusionary dichotomies and on one's own personal place of belonging, the home, in order to understand that home does not have to be based on exclusion but can rather be enriched by inclusion, where the boundaries of *home* and the *foreign* and the *self* and the *other* can blur without questioning our place in the world.

The search for this home, in which the different worlds can be connected is not a search for a physical place tied to the chronology of the past, but rather a space constituted by the *self*, apart from essentialist categories and cultural categorisation. Home, which entails stability and comfort, in cultural hybridity can only be constructed within this space, which is not a mere intersection of different cultures, but rather a processual space that allows, as Bhabha puts it, 'to touch the future on its hither side' (1994, p.10). In this sense, I conclude with a proposal, which is certainly not new, but today even more important. In order to achieve a communal life that is based on equality and solidarity, to construct a home, migrants, their offspring and the people of the host society require a third space in which they can approach one another, exchange their opinions and ideas and connect. Ultimately, the awareness and acceptance of the assumed foreign in ourselves and the *self* in the assumed *other* can surmount not only rigid monocultural tendencies but embrace difference as an opportunity.

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